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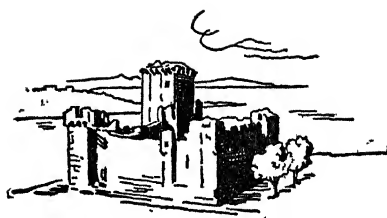
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# SOUNDING HARBORS





*"One is always expecting guests——"*

# SOUNDING HARBORS

BY

ELEANOR MERCEIN  
(*Mrs. Kelly*)

ILLUSTRATED BY

AMY HOGEBOOM



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(Mrs. Kelly)

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NACIO, HIS AFFAIRS  
SEA CHANGE  
SPANISH HOLIDAY  
ARABESQUE  
BASQUERIE  
THE BOOK OF BETTE  
WHY JOAN  
KILDARES OF STORM  
THE MANSION HOUSE  
SOUNDING HARBORS

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SOUNDING HARBORS

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SECOND EDITION

To J. C. W. B.

blithest of fellow adventurers,  
who has adventured farther than our ken.

The author wishes to acknowledge her indebtedness to Rose Wilder Lane's book, *Peaks of Shala*, for the use of certain Albanian expressions in the story "Corfiot Idyll."



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## FOREWORD

"Some sounding harbor where my soul can drink  
Deep . . ."

A seafarer may find this stray line of Baudelaire's lingering, quite without context, in the memory, or coming to it afresh whenever anchors drop in strange havens. For there is no place where echoes gather and remain as in an old harbor—echoes of passing history, present and remote; echoes of passing winds, and wars, and peoples. One may hold such a harbor to the ear as children hold a conch-shell, hearing within its emptiness all the pregnant diapason of ocean. And none whose taste has been so attuned in youth will ever be unaware thereafter, no matter how deep inland, of the sea-rumor; of gulls passing over; of the flash of sun on far sails.

It is for such as these, homesick always for they know not what, that I write stories.

The tales in this book are gleanings from two harbors of the Adriatic, neighboring each other nearly, yet as distantly apart as alien race and culture can separate. They are tales laid in today; but those who care to do so may trace in them shadows of earlier times, which can no more be destroyed than the shards of prehistoric pottery which geologists find in certain strata of the earth surface.

Of the two harbors, very tranquil now, one knew

## FOREWORD

the first adventurous prowls of Phœnician trading-galleys; knew also, and remembers, the bold-questing pinnaces of the Argonauts. The other, ancient Ragusa, gave its name to those rich argosies which first, through Venice, acquainted our cruder West with the material wealth and splendor of the Orient.

The traffic of the seven seas has passed now to other harbors; still that of Corfu preserves, as only the isolation of an island makes possible, a serenely Attic air, a delicate pagantry of culture which belongs unmistakably to that race aptly described by Bulfinch of the Mythology as "the only people who have seemed entirely at home in the world." While the port of Ragusa, called now by its even more ancient Slavic name, Dubrovnik, or Forest City, is still in its decline the Occidental outpost of a very different East from that of Greece; not yielding a single racial characteristic to such other races as have from time to time pressed it rather too ardently—on one side Italy; on the other, those barbarous Turks to whom for many centuries Serbia was so bitterly enslaved. Of these Slavic Serbs, freed now by their own exertions, many wrong things are reported—among others, that they are a lesser folk, a peasant people only, whose nobles have long since disappeared under the stress of war and exile. Yet I have been received at houses of Ragusa belonging to families which have held great estates there since the year 700, thus predating any other noble families, or any royal families, of Europe. Also they are accused, these indomitable Serbs,

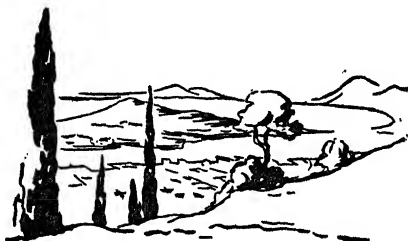
## FOREWORD

of being a bit *farouche*, fierce and violent and not a little shrewd—as what people must not be to have retained so fixed an identity through centuries of Turkish oppression? Yet not elsewhere in the world, East or West, does woman feel more honored by her womanhood, or friend more certain of loyalty even to the death, and afterwards. . . .

It is the haunt of many winds, that Adriatic littoral; the two more dominant of them known in Dalmatia by the names of Bora and Jugo—the first, a wind out of the north, sudden and terrible as Serbs in battle, a war-horse of a wind, which saith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; the other, suave of caprice and brightly perilous, so that many a good ship, lingering along the shore where Ulysses also lingered, goes to its sudden doom with the breath of flowers in its sails.

The people in this book owe much, so I fancy, either to Bora or to Jugo.

ELEANOR MERCEIN



*The Serbs, out of their heroic sufferings in pursuit of the vision which has possessed them, have distilled an essence which is one of the finest products of human culture. They have not left a legacy of statues and books and architectural achievements as did the Greeks and the Romans, and as the French and Americans are doing. Nothing tangible. Nothing but a spirit.*

*This exquisite, brave Serb spirit, ruthless and tender, making songs of its sorrows, proud and modest and enduring to the end, is a product of conditions which are rapidly disappearing, and which will soon have disappeared utterly. The Machine Age marches forward relentlessly, and the virtues of the Machine Age are not the virtues of the Heroic Age—in which all true Serbs still live.*

—LUCIE YOXIMOVIC



*Part One*

# THE BORA BLOWS





SLAVA









I

SLAVA

MAIKA DANITZA sat at ease in the fine little grape-  
arbor her sons had built for her during one of Nikola's  
last visits home, high up on her garden wall, looking  
out across the Adriatic to America. That it was merely  
Italy which bounded that far shore did not disturb  
her inner vision, since it was a fact happily unknown  
to her. What she saw always with the eyes of the  
heart—eyes even more bright and clear than her phys-  
ical vision—was a sort of giant's castle, a tremendous  
towered pile rising up out of a space of mists, as in  
Nikola's postcards; that imposing domicile called  
Manhattan, in which her favorite son now lived and

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moved and had, most suitably, his being—for there was something about this eldest of her children which suggested loftier things than she had dared dream for the others, she whose dreaming had ever been of a strangely untrammelled nature for a Slavic peasant woman.

Nor had Nikola failed his mother. Each time he returned to them his brothers treated him with increasing shyness; though not for long. Despite the elegance of his city dress, like a real *gospars*, the new sleekness of hair once so vigorously unruly, the gradual paling of warm, gold-tinted skin which comes from over-confinement withindoors, Nikola soon had the family all at work again, as of old, under his active direction, building things—such luxuries as this *tarača* of the Maika's with seats all around, or the fine concrete pen for their pig, or a dry-laid retaining-wall for the upper terrace where the great plane-tree grew. Such a specimen, declared Nikola, deserved the best protection expert masonry could devise; for the tree was the glory of their entire neighborhood, sole relic thereabouts of the primeval forest which had given to the town below its ancient name Dubrovnik, or Forest Place. Anté, Nikola's father, liked to tell people that Rasić the housebuilder had made him a standing offer for his tree of 30,000 dinars, nearly \$600 American. "And what did I say to Rasić in reply? I said, 'Pfut! Sch! My son, the Americanec, how he would laugh to hear you! What to him is 30,000 dinars?'"

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Yet it was good to know that one had such a fortune rooted upon one's own earth, as it were, safe as in a bank.

Only Danitza had never been able to regard their tree quite as a potential bank account. An inner atavism of her nature recognized in the forest patriarch some supernatural presence such as the fairy giant Regoc, who had deigned to take her household under especial protection. Also, the tree reminded her of that happiest period of her life when she had been for a few years in service to the Baronessa, their *padrone's* mother. In the park of the great Sverlja estate stood several such noble patriarchs as this, true gentlemen's trees. Privately she liked to think of her own narrow topmost terrace, a space perhaps thirty by fifty feet in size, as "The Park." An ambitious woman, Danitza.

Despite his American city look, her son Nikola was still the excellent workman he had been born. It seemed as if, in his visits home, he could not get enough of using his great, strong, skillful hands again—he who, because of his gymnasium training, with a year of study in Paris afterward, was no mere laboring-man like so many Balkan emigrants to America, but a professional, an intellectual. The pride of it was sometimes almost more than Danitza could bear.

The presents he always brought them were commensurate with his high estate—on his last visit, for example, the fittings for an entire American bathroom, grand as in any hotel, which he had himself installed in the

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lean-to woodshed. That the cost of water piped from the city supply would make any use of such an innovation prohibitive was something his family had not the heart to remind him; however, possession of the sole bathroom in the vicinity gave a certain tone to their *domachia*; neighbors who came in for the yearly Slava were much impressed.

It was Nikola, too, who realized that the three hundred-odd steps which led from the lower town up the cliff to its higher reaches made heavy climbing in hot weather for an old one-legged soldier, and had bought somewhere an entire carload of sapling shade trees, and had himself planted these, with the aid of his brothers, along the municipal flight of steps. There was always about Nikola Kranik a curious independence, a sense of public spirit, a lively disregard of obstacles and consequences which often reminded his mother of the masterful ways of gentry.

His father, naturally more conservative, as men are, would have preferred the heir of his house to put all this good money into a bank rather than to lavish it so recklessly on bathrooms and shade trees and the like. "Remember, my son, we are not *gospari*, but only *magstori*," he would say, with proper pride. "For us such luxuries are not needful. Nor is it well to make unnecessary display of prosperity"—for Anté belonged to the period when Serbian peasantry dared not cultivate their land to full capacity for fear that covetous Turkish masters, or even more covetous Austrian ones, would

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tax all profit away from them. . . . Yet if one listened always to a husband, thought Danitza, with womanly impatience of the sex, where would one be now? Working the heart out still, no doubt, amid barren hills where spring is so brief that the melted snow water has already disappeared into the porous *krst* rock ere ever there is time to gather the first crop; and after that, one long fight to save the *dollina* from a fierce tropic sun, until the fiercer autumn winds would send them shivering behind walls again, together with all the farm animals, for mutual warmth and comfort.

To her it was a haven of refuge from long fear, this little thick-walled house set like an eagle's eyrie at the very top of the sea cliff, for which they had managed to exchange the sparse acres of Anté's inheritance when the loss of his leg made it impossible to cultivate them further—one woman alone against the grim, gray hills of Hercegovina.

It was ambitious Danitza who, after consultation with their friend the *padrone*, had conceived the idea of a food-shop just outside the city gate as something which a man of one leg could manage quite as well as if he had several, especially with so many family legs to help. The shop had prospered, for the farm folk thereabouts, all knowing Anté, were not abashed to stop at his place that they might change their common peasant dress for Sunday clothes before going into the town; and so they brought to him always their freshest eggs and greenstuffs, and bought from him always such

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canned goods and other staples as they required to take back to their homes.

Being mountain-bred, Anté had naturally selected the highest possible situation for his new dwelling, some three hundred steps above the little produce-shop. Danitza found the ever-varying seascape below quite companionable, by contrast with the barren mountains for which her husband was so homesick still, after twenty years, that sometimes he could not eat his supper for remembering, and must needs take out his *gouslé* and sing awhile, until sorrow passed. But then she was not, like Anté, Hercegovinian born, having been taken young from a foundling asylum by the Baronessa to serve the little Baronessas as a sort of nursemaid-play-mate-companion. So perhaps it was natural for her to prefer this neat, new little house—it could not, the agent assured them, be more than a hundred years built—to which came drifting up the constant sounds of what she thought of as “the city,” staccato honking of automobiles, rhythmic blare of the café band, shrill shouts of children from the gymnasium play-yard, where her own sons had been able to run and play and shout as loudly as the rest. Even her girls had been taught their letters, like *gospe* girls; whereas in Hercegovina learning was a luxury possible only to the rich, Austria having left the country a legacy of many fortresses, few schools, and no roads passable in winter by which to reach them. Danitza often nodded companionable acknowledgment to the statue of Holy

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Blaise, Dubrovnik's patron saint and their own, set in his niche at the top of the tallest bastion tower, just on a level with her eyrie. It made things very safe, she thought, to be on terms of such high intimacy with a saint, especially one so powerful; like the great plane-tree he cast, as the peasant saying goes, a good shadow on her house.

Though she sat dreaming so at day's end, Danitza was of course not idle. Distaff at shoulder, ceaselessly, automatically, her fingers twisted the raw sheep's wool into yarn—it seemed to her that she had twisted most of her life away into this endless thin gray strand out of which to make comfort for her men. And why not? Surely it would be disgrace to a *maika* if her men had need to buy their comfort elsewhere. Besides, while twisting yarn the trembling of her hands was not so noticeable. Danitza had a queer shame of the trembling of her hands; people were so apt to believe that because the fingers were a little shaky the wits, too, had become enfeebled.

Behind her in the house the little Toushka, last remaining of her unwed daughters, with the aid of her new daughter-in-law, young Yozhé's wife, were making final preparation for tomorrow's Slava. They thought they did not need her help, eh? Let them think so! One had to learn when to let the young take over. The Maika smiled to herself. Toushka knew better how to arrange the halo of thick sunburnt braids around her pretty face than to bake a proper *kolatch*—however,

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it was the braids which had caught the fancy of her betrothed, rather than Toushka's cake-bread; they did not cheat him. She herself had prepared, as always, the more important *zito*, that compound of boiled wheat and sugar and ground nuts, signifying earth's best, of which those who celebrate a Slava together partake in memory of their dead. All that remained was for the neighborhood pope to bless this—the Kranik family being of Greek Orthodox communion—together with a tall Slava candle which must burn all day. A long table board had been already laid on trestles in the fore-court, ready for neighbors who would come on the morrow, with congratulations; and up under the great plane-tree, the topmost terrace that she called her Park had been freshly rolled for the *kolo* dancing, so that it was almost like a threshing-floor. Proud as he was of his city orchard of five fruit-bearing trees, and of the pig-pen on the second terrace, and of the beehives on the third, the true pride of Anté's heart was a little *gumno* he had leveled out on the upper terrace, rather like a tennis court, so that all the young people might come of a Sunday or a saint's day to dance, as they had danced on his father's threshing-floor in Hercegovina. Anté himself enjoyed the *kolo* still, despite his wooden leg; so did the *padrone*, if he came. . . .

Again Danitza smiled to herself. Of course he would come, the *padrone*. When had he ever failed her Slava day? She must get out the baroque pearl ear-rings again, and the gold filigree chain, and the locket he had



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fastened about her neck on her wedding-day. "Ah, old Star of the Morning," he would say, as always—since this was the meaning of her name, "Danitza"—"you keep a little of my heart in the locket still, eh, as a souvenir?" And she would answer as always, demurely: "But it is, you see, so small a locket, *signor baronino mio!*" For in Dubrovnik, which has been at various times Ragusa, people of the upper circles still affect a touch of Italianism to emphasize their detestation of the tyrant Austria. . . . Not that Danitza was of the upper circles, even by affiliation, having long since chosen otherwise.

And suppose she had not? mused the good woman sometimes, as the best of women will. Suppose she had failed to keep her wits about her and had not run away from the Baronessa's house and married herself as quickly as possible to kind old Anté, who had been young Anté then? In that case, her thought finished, the *padrone* would most probably not be coming now as an honored guest to their Slava; nor would her sons, even had they been born half gentlemen, have held up their heads as high, perhaps, as now when they knew themselves to be sons of a decent peasant's wife—or would they?

Long ago, on impulse, she had spoken of this thing to her eldest born, asking him who was so strangely like a gentleman whether he would have liked to be born the son of a gentleman. He had answered her question, peasant fashion, with another question: "Was Baron Sverlja in his youth so fine a figure of a man, Maika?"

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"He is still a very fine figure of a man," she replied, loyally. "Handsome as our king himself, no?—though of course less young."

"And did he make very fine love to you?"

"But naturally, as the *gospari* do," she said, bristling. "Wherever the *kolo* danced, there he would come, even as now, and choose me always openly for his partner, so that none other dared to ask me. It was, of course, great honor, only—that is no way for an orphan girl to find a proper husband!"

"And the *padrone* did not care, I suppose, to marry you himself?" asked her son, quietly.

"To marry? But what sort of foolish talk is this! Is it possible," she said, with some acerbity, "for a *gospar* of high family to take to wife some common foundling girl out of his mother's kitchen? Eh, no! Afterwards they would have got for me, no doubt, a proper husband, either he or the Baronessa, as is the *gospari* custom. But that I did not choose. So I ran away."

"Why, I wonder?" Nikola was always a great one for wondering. "Was it that you were—afraid, perhaps?"

"Afraid! Of our own *padrone*?"

"Of yourself, Maika. Because you loved him?"

"Love? Na, na, na! How should a modest peasant girl think about such foolishness?" she said, testily, in her confusion. But later she returned to the subject: "It was you, Niko, of whom I was afraid, I think."

"I? Not yet born?"

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She nodded. "You, and the other children. It seemed that otherwise you might one day look upon your mother with eyes of shame, which is a sorry thing. But perhaps," she said, uncertainly, "I was wrong? He is rich, the *padrone*. He could have done much for sons of his which Anté and I cannot do."

Then Nikola, though such filial demonstration is rare enough among Serbs of any class, took up his mother's hand and kissed each finger separately before he laid it against his forehead. "I would rather be your son, just yours, Kranik Danitza, than the son of the finest *gospar* in our land," he said. "And now you will bless me, mother of my pride, for I am going away to a land where such things cannot be, where men are born neither peasants nor nobles, but only men; where two who love are free to take one another as the heart speaks, without shame."

"Even in marriage, my son?" she asked, doubtfully.

He laughed without mirth. "In marriage, or out of it—what matter?" he said, having imbibed certain new notions from the propaganda which filters constantly out of Russia to its South-Slav cousins; and shortly afterwards he went away to America.

That was ten years ago; and still he had not found the heart's free union of which he had gone away so confident; still there were no little Antés or Danitzas to bring home with him, every year or two, for the Slava day. And for this Slava day there was to be not even

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any Nikola, because, he wrote, of a financial *kriza* which was occurring even in rich America. Danitza sighed.

Just then she caught sight of her husband mounting the cliff stairs at a rapid gait for one handicapped by a wooden leg; and when he caught sight of her in the *tarača*, he waved a slip of blue paper above his head excitedly. Accustomed as she was by now to cablegrams—Nikola was always extravagant in his ways—her heart missed its beat. No doubt it was only congratulations for their Slava; nevertheless she could not wait, and cried out, a little breathless, "But tell me, Anté, tell me ——!"

Obligingly he cupped his two hands about his smiling mouth, and soon the whole neighborhood heard the tidings that Niko Kranik was coming, after all, to spend their saint's day with his parents, that he had telegraphed—in itself no negligible miracle—from a ship due to dock early in the morning, and that this was not all! Niko brought with him out of America a friend.

Such preparations as had gone before were child's play compared with what now ensued. No longer did the Maika content herself with leaving arrangements in the hands of a flighty Toushka and an inexperienced city daughter-in-law. The house was small for those already occupying it, since all their children who lived scattered in the country had returned, with their own children, for the family occasion. Nevertheless, room must be found for two more; for that Nikola's friend

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should be left to the cold mercies of a paid hotel was a breach of hospitality unthinkable. Mattresses could be borrowed from neighbors who were not keeping Slava; all the children must be put with their grandparents to sleep, while all the wives should occupy the second bed-chamber together, and all the husbands the third. Toushka must share her maiden attic with Yozhé and his young bride, who, as the latest married, had been established in the parlor, or "clean room." This left the bed of state, with its high-piled quilts and goose-feather pillows, free for Nikola and his friend. Old Anté silenced certain mutters of discontent by a stern: "Think shame, Yozhé! Do you forget that before we became so fine here, with our city ways, all slept together in the *izba* where each of you was born, with the cattle in the other half of the house?"

Meanwhile, helpful neighbors were improvising an arch of welcome over the gate with "PODRAVLJEN AMERIKANCI" (greetings) done upon it in flowers, since Niko Kranik, great laughing playboy that he was, had brought much honor to his vicinity. Had not one of his architectural designs for the building of some great work—it happened to be a garbage-disposal plant—been printed in a New York newspaper, with his full name beneath, as having won a prize of a hundred dollars? A copy of that newspaper, somewhat yellowed and worn with use, was lying even now on the clean-room table, in a careless yet conspicuous manner, so that none who came for the Slava could fail to notice.

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The day began at about five o'clock, when the entire family adjourned to the dock; with the exception of the Maika, since some one had to be at home when the pope came to sprinkle the house with holy water. She and the priest were both watching from the vantage-point of the grape-arbor on the wall when her oldest grandson, as advanced guard of the reception committee, came leaping three at a time up the cliff-steps to report that Uncle Niko was following, but that his friend preferred to stop at the hotel, so that he must first take her there.

"Her!" cried out his grandmother, faintly. "The friend is, then, a woman?"

"A *gospa*," declared the child, wide-eyed, "with little feet like a countess, Maika, and fair as our ikon of the Gospodja Marija in the church."

"That, my son, is impossible—no human woman can be as fair as Our Lady of Heaven," corrected the priest, sonorously; but decided to remain long enough to pass professional judgment on the matter.

The American guest found them there, still waiting, when she dismissed her cab at the flower-arched gate some hours later; two faces peering down from the top of the wall, one heavily bearded, with long hair knotted like a woman's beneath his tall priestly stove-pipe; the other unwrinkled, but fallen into lines as lovely as Da Vinci's aging Saint Anne, the eyes beneath a black silk headkerchief black as the silk itself, but softer than any eyes she had ever seen, and kinder and more anxious.

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"I am Sonya," she said at once to this poignant face, with an instinct of reassurance, "Sonya Endicott. Nicholas will have told you about me, no doubt? For you, I am sure, must be the Maika."

Then the smile came, Nicholas' own smile, that always brought the heart unexpectedly up into her throat, so warm it was, and deep, and utterly trustful.

"Sonya—that is a name of us, a Slavic name! Eh, the bad one," Danitza cried out, delightedly, "not to have told us it was like this!" Then realizing that the newcomer had even spoken to her in Serbian, tears dimmed her gaze. "A *nasha*, not, after all, any strange *amerikanka*!"

Miss Endicott, rather touched, did not at once correct the impression; if her Serbian was as good as that, she thought, with some complacency, no use to disappoint this sweet old mother of Nicholas any sooner than necessary.

A great fear began to pass from Danitza. She had of late taken, for her son's sake, deep interest in things American. Whenever a cruise-ship filled the town for a day or so with visitors from that far land that is to Balkan folk the true Bujan, the Isle Bountiful of Serb mythology, ever aglow with the magic goldstone, Alatir, she had made occasion to go down and help at her husband's shop so that she might watch unobserved from behind its casements. What she saw frightened her a little. They were, these women of the West, so strangely free in their ways, so almost bold, speaking out in the

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presence of men as if men themselves. And they seemed never to age, like other people. Women with hair gone grayer than her own wore it waved and ringleted, and affected trim, tight frocks, and even trimmer, tighter shoes, and colors as gay as any bride-girl's.

The young ones, on the other hand, looked to her almost the same age as the matrons, except for a certain bloom upon them that cannot be quite imitated, nor yet impaired, by artifice. They were slimmer of outline, too—so slim that Danitza wondered how the poor things, lacking either thighs or breasts, expected to bear and nourish young. What chance, she thought in pity, would these ill-fed, flimsily clad, slight-hipped young creatures have were they taken on a market day to stand on the fountain steps and be appraised by the village bachelors in comparison with Serbian girls?—their buxom sturdiness augmented by plissé petticoats, flying ribbons, blouse and apron thick with needlework, even the amount of the dowry sewed sometimes in gold coins about their headdress. With such, a husband could see what he was getting; whereas with these fragile, anæmic, old-young *amerikanči*. . . . To be sure, Danitza reminded herself, demoiselles like her own young Baronesses were married off in quite another manner, after the way of the *gospod* born. But if, as Nikola had said, there were in America no *gospod* born —?

Yet somehow she had never hoped that her son, on his visits home, might select a bride of his own people to take back with him to start a home in the new country.



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It seemed to her natural that America should have spoiled his taste for sturdy *srbska* brides.

And now at last, this. For Danitza was not fooled. Does a young man, still in the lusty vigor of his prime, choose for mere "friend" a girl who looks like a tall princess out of a fairy-tale?

These two women who loved Nicholas Kranik regarded each other in covert appraisal. Here indeed was no *amerikanĉa* of the type to be dreaded, this quiet-spoken girl with the still, singularly intent eyes which made the only effect of color in her face, and that more an effect of depth than color. The hair, straight and fine, was folded about a high small head, the square-tipped nose and chin were contradicted by lips that drooped rather wistfully, and the slight crooked smile that hovered about these gave an impression less youthful than the rest of her. As with so many of those ageless Western women Danitza had seen, the eyelids seemed a little weary.

Nor was she beautiful, according to Danitza's standards—so tall and pale-tinted. It was difficult to say, indeed, just why she gave such a fairy-princess effect. Her dress was quite plain, made of heavy dark-blue linen, the feet shod in the simplest of leather shoes. She wore no ornament except one small ring, not even gold—unconsciously Danitza fingered her own solid peasant jewelry—set with a dullish stone whose gleam of translucence matched the deep, colorless darkness of the eyes. Simple attire indeed, for a Slava day! The girl,

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thought the Maika, with growing pity, must be of quite poor family, perhaps even of no family, like herself; inmates of her own orphanage had been obliged to wear just such blue linen uniforms as this, just such stout little thicksoled boots. She asked about it, kindly; simple folk do not mind asking personal questions; it shows an interest.

Nikola's friend answered, with her faint, crooked little smile, that she was indeed rather an orphan nowadays, her family having given her up as a bad job. It was not an idiom which translates well into Serbo-Croat.

"Given you up—*tchk, tchk!*" said Danitza, sadly. The family must be poor indeed if they had been forced to abandon their child, while living.

"You see, most of us Endicotts are such painfully conservative people," said Nikola's friend, further—an explanation which told Nikola's mother less than nothing. How like the boy to have brought the unfortunate one straight to his own parents! So kind he was, their Niko; the house always full, when he was at home, of stray little beasts, masterless dogs, birds which could not fly, small cats that lacked the mother.

Redoubling her attentive kindness, Danitza, with the priest, led this honored guest up toward her house, where other guests had already assembled. It made quite a little ceremonial procession.

Acquainted as she was with out-of-the-way corners of the world, it happened to be Sonya Endicott's first experience of a Serbian peasant home, and her trained

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eye missed few details. The sunken path led between higher plots of ground planted in vegetables which a fastidious nostril told her were chiefly of the cabbage family, toward a low, long stone façade with a crude sun-dial above its door, and a flagged courtyard in front where many people sat eating and drinking. Apparently the Slava, whatever that might be, was well under way. An elderly man, obviously the host, clumped about very actively on a wooden leg, waiting on everybody; rather a comely old fellow, with a mild blue eye and fierce walrus mustaches showing light against a sun-brown skin, dressed in very bagging knickerbockers above white wool-lace stockings, and a sleeveless braided jacket over an immaculate frilled and embroidered blouse. His shoes were the braided Serbian sandals, or *opanzi*, turned up with a pompon at the toe, and his minute round cap sat jauntily to one side of his head; nor did he remove this when he came to welcome her to his house with shy stiff courtesy.

Nikola himself, not yet aware of her presence, stood tall among a group of other very tall young men, several in costume like his father except that their caps still had the fringe at one side which proclaimed them bachelors, all singing. It was, Sonya reflected, tolerantly, a race of no great musical culture. He did not pause when he saw her, but finished to the end of the oddly turned marching chorus, the color hot in his face. His blush was sufficient welcome, and Danitza's heart warmed still further toward their guest, as it would have warmed

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toward any woman who looked at her son with eyes like that. Let Niko assure her before the holy ikons that this one was not his chosen, his *nevačica*, this quiet orphan-girl who was blessedly not quite a stranger, since she spoke their tongue—a mother knows what she knows! Yet because of this instinctive mother-sense, perhaps, a sudden fear stirred in her as of something amiss. “You are not,” she asked, in quick anxiety, “already a married woman—no?”

For reassurance the girl held up a ringless left hand. “Alas, not yet!” she said, with a smile for the approaching Nikola.

“Eh, well, at so young an age—” murmured Danitza, consolingly.

Sonya said that she was not so young as she looked, being over thirty. “Old enough to know my own mind, at least,” she added, with another smile for Nikola.

“Over thirty!” exclaimed the Maika, aghast; then reminded herself that Nikola also was over thirty, no longer the boy she liked to think him. These bachelor fellows must not expect too much when they went a-courting. Even so, she declared, it was no very great age if one had still one’s health.

“And one’s hair and teeth,” murmured Sonya.

Eh, indeed, agreed the Maika; for marriage these were most necessary. There were even men, she continued her encouragement, who preferred a more serious and settled mate, rather than some saucy young flibbertigibbit like their Tousehka; and no doubt without

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parents to arrange, or some good neighbor to act as *provodadjia*, marriage for a dowerless girl was none too easy ——

"In America," interrupted Nikola, frowning, "marriage is not considered so important as with us; especially among people who, like Miss Endicott, follow the artistic professions."

"Eh, our guest is then an artist? What an honor to our house!" exclaimed his mother, gladly. "She makes pictures with paints, or perhaps with marble, like our neighbor Mestrovic?"

Sonya said that while she did make pictures of a sort, they were done in neither of the mediums mentioned.

"That is why Miss Endicott decided to come to Dalmatia, Maika," explained Nikola, further, with a touch of somberness, almost of bitterness, in his voice. "In order to study a type of life new to her, and to make pictures of it."

"A great honor to our country, surely," repeated Danitza, with puzzled courtesy; but disappointment began to cloud her earlier elation. Perhaps a mother could be wrong? "Endicott"—certainly that was no Serb name; nor did the stranger exhibit quite the blushing, self-conscious bashfulness that was to be expected of a strange young *neva* brought in for approval to her bride-man's family. Perhaps, after all, as Niko had assured them from the first, she was merely an American friend who happened to be traveling on the same ship.

Yet if this were so, why did those still, intent eyes

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follow him whenever he left her side, as if they could never get their fill of him? And why was Niko himself so changed from the great, laughing, prank-playing boy he had always been, to this man who was by turns overexcited and morose, hanging about herself even more affectionately than usual, like an ailing child that clings to its mother's skirts? And above all, why, when he took his guest into the house to show her the beauties of the clean-room—for Nikola, despite his wide experience of the world, showed always great pride in his parents' neat little peasant *domachia*—why did Danitza, coming upon them there some time later, find them not admiring anything at all—neither the chromo of King Peter whom Anté had helped to free Serbia, nor the piles of goose-feather pillows which had been her dowry from the Baronessa, nor the ikon with the tall Slava candle burning before it, nor the likenesses of all their dead, each frame and glass hand-painted in forget-me-nots—but standing wrapped in an embrace so close, so oblivious, that they did not hear her enter or go away again, on tiptoe, closing the door behind her? The Maika was oddly troubled by this sight, her own old pulses beating with memory of such an embrace in which she had once lost herself, she with another, kissing and clinging with the desperation of finality.

This was what took possession of her mind and gave to the happiness of the Slava day its tragic undertone—the sense of desperate finality, of an impending sorrow which is the saddest of all sorrows, that of parting. She

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had no longer any doubt that he had found, remembering her passionate Nikola, such a mating between man and woman as he had dreamed of, and she for him; yet must now relinquish, even as his mother had done. And so there would never be those little American Antés and Danitzas to bring home for the Slava day; for she knew, better than her own more patient heart, the heart of this first and closest of her children, with its fierce Slav intensity, and fidelity, and capacity for self-immolation.

She was glad that the *padrone* happened to come early. Between these two, peasant woman and gentleman, the long-waned fires of youth had left their residue of mutual understanding.

Sonya also welcomed this arrival; she had heard a good deal about the Kraniks' *padrone*, and was curious. This last day with her lover, too, had taken on a strange, dreamlike quality, from which she felt it necessary to emerge. Deliberately and in vain she reminded herself that it was nearly over now, that only a few miles and hours away—the width of the Adriatic, the duration of another night—lay Venice, Europe, civilization, all those familiar things which would become again her things. She had even tried, with the tact of much experience, to enter into the spirit of this naïve occasion; had borrowed from shy, adoring Toughka—for she never failed of her success with younger girls—a headkerchief and a gaily embroidered apron, and had offered her services in the kitchen. She saw, however,

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that it merely caused embarrassment there. "On Slava day it is the privilege of the *men* to serve," explained old Anté, as he hurried about, plying his guests with wine and food assiduously as if they were customers in his shop.

It seemed also their privilege to enjoy themselves, reflected Sonya, sitting apart among the women in discreet, bored idleness, while the males sang and jested and laughed together, manfully ignoring female presence. To Sonya, beyond a limp handshake, or a muttered "*Dobra dan!*" ("Good day!"), none of the Kranik guests paid the least attention, although she fancied that such complete indifference was somewhat studied. No doubt hers was not a type of charm which appealed to peasant taste, she thought; yet what did Nicholas mean by deserting her for other guests? She wondered, suddenly frightened, whether he had already made his farewell to her, there in that odd little stuffy crowded chamber, where the memorial candle burned before a tinsel ikon. He had not wished, she knew, to kiss her there; he had perhaps felt that it would not be quite reverent—yet, as usual, they had been unable to resist each other. Oh, undoubtedly she must go, and soon! She thought more than once that she would slip away unnoticed, down to the hotel for her bags, and back to the boat to sleep, without any further leave-taking. And then, over the heads of the others, she would encounter again the smoldering mute misery of his look, and she could not go—not yet.



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With interest she watched the gradual approach of Baron Sverlja through various groups who welcomed him respectfully, yet without marked subservience; his pause here and there to exchange friendly banter, to pinch a pretty cheek, to slap a shoulder—a very affable gentleman, affecting that slight carelessness of dress not unusual among men past middle age, yet still of the alert and soldierly Serb bearing, distinctly not, for all his Italian speech and air, quite a Latin. His salute of old Kranik was the acme of military precision, as was his host's in return. "Eh, then, how goes it with you, friend Anté?" he inquired; and the other answered in the same tongue, Dalmatia's second speech, that it went very well indeed, better even than usual, since the little one—he indicated with a thumb Nikola's six feet of stalwart brawn—had returned from America bringing with him—Eh, but perhaps the *padrone* had already heard?

"Naturally, naturally," admitted the baron, who pretended to no aristocratic indifference as to the affairs of his humbler neighbors. "That is why I am here so early. And the girl? Young and fresh, what, and modest as a little bride should be?"

Eh, so-so, so-so; the girl was well enough in a foreign way. "Only, *Signor padrone*," added Anté, confidentially, "the Maika thinks that there may be no dowry!"

"Sch, sch, that is bad, that is very bad," commiserated the gentleman. "Our Niko deserves better things of his new country. Still, if the dowry lacks, one will at least

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not be expected to put up much in the way of marriage settlements, eh?" he added, by way of consolation; and arrived in due course at the bench from which Danitza arose, beaming, to drop him a demure curtsy.

Then, at sight of the girl beside her, the gentleman's manner changed. No doubt he noted something here that the others missed—the silken slenderness of the ankles above those stout little leather boots; the translucent gleam of the rare star-sapphire from its platinum setting; perhaps certain indications less material. At any rate, he bowed instinctively over the hand the American offered him, and lifted it to his lips.

A stir of surprise ran among the surrounding women. For all his democratic bonhomie, the *padrone* did not thus salute their hands. On the contrary; unless he was at some pains to circumvent them, it was they who quite frequently succeeded in kissing his.

"They tell me, Baron," the girl was saying, pleasantly, in the language he apparently preferred to use, "that now you have come, the dancing will begin. I have been waiting to see the *kolo* danced. Shall we go up and watch it together from that bench under the great tree yonder?"

The other women stared in some dismay after this tall young stranger who did not hesitate to give her orders to a man who was also a nobleman; and the Maika's misgivings deepened. But Sonya's chosen companion had no idea of merely watching.

"It is, do you see, not a *kolo* which they dance now,

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but the *lindzo*, madam, the dance of our own province," he explained, by way of apology for his defection; and a moment later she saw him whirling among the whirling couples as giddily as any, snapping his fingers, shaking his hands high in the air like an Indian brave in a war-dance, while not Danitza, but her youngest daughter, circled nimbly about him an intricate little pattern of steps. It was Nikola who danced the *lindzo* with his mother, swinging her till the skirts stood out from her body like a wheel, lifting her off her feet again and again, to her placid pleasure; until the look in Sonya's eyes called him to her irresistibly.

"I want you to dance with me like that!" she told him, under her breath.

But if she could give orders to Baron Sverlja, Nikola Kranik was another matter. "No," he said, "it would not be suitable. Besides, it is too rough, you have not the strength."

"Nonsense! If your mother can do it, at her age ——"

"My mother is a vigorous old peasant woman who has practiced such dancing all her life," he replied briefly, and sought another partner.

She watched him because she could not help herself, pale with anger, yet presently comforted by the realization that, although the partner he had chosen was quite the prettiest of these warm-skinned, bright-haired peasant girls, the figure he danced with her remained curiously impersonal, like an athletic contest, almost

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a combat. At first the pair danced back to back, quite indifferently; then he turned suddenly and caught the girl up and whirled her about, under his arms, around his shoulders, lifted her high in the air, set her down abruptly, and stood opposite her, both quite silent until the music began again, and they with it. The orchestra, a single player in the center of the circle, jerked out a strange staccato rhythm on his one-stringed instrument while he stamped the time with his foot. It was a curiously primitive spectacle, all these violently active couples engaging and disengaging; more exciting to Sonya than any erotic dance of a more familiar East.

"It is, like most dancing, merely courtship," Baron Sverlja told her, mopping his brow as he seated himself at her side again. "Souvenir of the time when men of our land had to take themselves wives by force. It pleases you?" he smiled, having noted her absorption. "Many ladies of your more modern life find themselves intrigued by such a manner of courtship. Our Serbian lads—*ma*, what men they are, eh?" He smiled again when she did not answer.

He had returned to the American visitor with some reluctance, and only at the earnest plea of Danitza, to whom their guest had looked just a little wistful, seated in state beneath the plane-tree while others danced. "If you would but talk a little to her, *Signor padrone*, as you so well know how to do?"

"Eh, then, why not talk to her yourself?" he shrugged. "You tell me that she speaks our tongue."

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"Ah, but, my baronino, it is that we cannot speak hers!" coaxed Danitza, voicing a truth deeper than she knew.

A great amateur of his people, the Ragusan gentleman had come of late years somehow to resent the intrusion of visitors from a more effete civilization, who amused themselves by turning the heads of the handsome Dalmatian boys, and went away again, careless of what havoc they might have wrought. Here was another of them, no doubt; only the victim this time was Niko Kranik, whom he loved. . . . However, one had one's duties of hospitality. He began by explaining perfunctorily the purposes of the Slava; not, he said, so much a religious festival, although it commemorated the special saint's day upon which every family celebrating it was converted to Christianity.

"Converted from what?" she interrupted, with interest.

"Eh, from some such worship as is common to all ancient peoples: the sun, the four winds, the thunder-gods, the forest. Scratch any devout Slav, madam, and you will find very close under the skin a devout pagan. For trees especially they have still peculiar reverence. This one under which we sit is far more the tutelary deity of the house than is Sveta Vlaho yonder—that Saint Blaise whose feast-day they celebrate. And why not? It is a noble specimen."

"For which the house-builder Rasić has made a standing offer of \$600—oh yes, I heard about it before

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I had been here half an hour," she said, with her little crooked smile. "Fancy expecting to buy a *genius loci* for such a price. . . . Do go on about the Slava, Baron."

The ceremony had served for Serbian people, he told her, the same purpose as the *gouslé*-playing; it had kept alive race memory, race history, during the long centuries of oppression when there were no books. It made the occasion for the knitting together of ties and fealties which might otherwise have weakened; also, since it was the one occasion upon which the fighting Serbs might be taken unaware, relaxed with wine and song, many a family celebrates its Slava as a day of mourning also, the Turks having seized the opportunity to exterminate as many as possible at one stroke.

"You speak of 'them'—you are not Serb yourself, then?"

"But certainly! I am a patrician of Ragusa—only my city-state had not the misfortune ever to be conquered by the Turk or any other master," he said, not without pride. "Also, the soil of any country, madam, belongs less to those of us who happen to have inherited it than to those who for centuries have tilled it, suffered for it, mingled with it their life blood. Our peasants, you understand, do not mate out of other lands, as do we of the more traveled classes; it is they, therefore, who are the true nationals, the true patriots, the true Serbs. Also, it is from the soil," he declared, mounting what was evidently a favorite hobby, "that

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our true great men come, our artists like Mestrović, our poets, our bards, such as old Anté there, who have sung our people into many a line of battle, and will again. And will again," he repeated, somberly.

"Nicholas' father," she asked, in surprise, "is a poet?"

"One of the finest *gouslars* in this province, madam, who makes his song to his need, yet cannot write his name. That is why so many have come to his Slava, why he is so deeply respected among us here, though without money or education. No doubt it is something you of America cannot credit, that a man so poor in all things should be thus respected."

She asked, "You know my country well, Baron?"

He admitted to knowing America only by hearsay.

"A pity," she commented, impersonally, "that Europeans do not travel more; they would be less provincial. . . . It is from his father, then, that Nicholas gets his touch of artistry, his taste for things that have surprised me in a son of peasants? I've even wondered—" She broke off, looking at her companion speculatively, remembering his many kindnesses to this family, of which Nicholas had told her; the money, long since repaid, lent for his year at a French academy; the general air of patron he bore to the whole establishment.

"Not from his father, no. It is from the soil of our country that young Kranik draws, like milk from a mother's breast, a genius the world is only beginning to appreciate," declared the baron, rhetorically. "Deep soil, long lying fallow, enriched by blood and tears,

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unstirred by oppressors who sought and took from us only a surface profit. And where are they now, those oppressors, your lascivious Turkey, your purse-proud Austria? Dying, madam, or dead of their own surfeit. Whereas our Serbs, lean, hungry wolves of a ravaged forest—" He paused and helped himself to a pinch of snuff, and sneezed with emotion. "Eh, well! One grows garrulous. Yet look, madam, at the face of that old Danitza yonder. What do you see in it?"

"I see," said Sonya, somewhat relieved by this turn of the conversation, "the remains of real beauty—also a strong resemblance to her son."

"Beauty? Ah, if you could but have seen her at the time I loved her! But you see more than beauty. You see there the history of a race—again and again defeated, rising from each defeat the stronger, like that giant who had but to touch his native earth to rise renewed. Who knows what varying blood mingles now in the veins of these whom we call our inferiors? In the veins, for example, of that woman whom my mother took from a foundling-house? Nose of an eagle race, the gentle, submissive eyes of Eastern women, lips as sensitively molded as—eh, as your own, madam; together with the never-idle peasant hands. It is not for any palsy of age that those hands of Danitza's tremble; I must tell you one day that little history. . . . And what," he continued, with an abrupt change of tone, "are you doing with Danitza's son, if one may ask?"



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Taken by surprise, Sonya flushed. "You would better ask, Baron, what Danitza's son is doing with me!"

"So?" It was his turn to glance speculatively at her. "You have known the boy long?"

"Long enough," she replied, noncommittally, "for him to have taught me Serbian." She added, because of her need of a confidant: "I was interested in him at first purely as a Slavic type, you see. But afterwards ——"

"Eh, yes, afterwards—naturally," murmured the other, his eyes, like hers, following the swarthy, vigorous grace of Nikola, swinging his partner through the *kolo*. "It is for women of your sort rather a dangerous type, no doubt. . . . You are now travelling companions?"

"We happened to come over on the same boat. Or no, that isn't quite true. I discovered that he was running away, just in time to book my passage on the same ship. Nick was really angry about it, at first. Then he became reconciled, because he thought a visit to his home might cure me. I must say," she admitted, ruefully, "that the idea had point."

"From what," asked the other bluntly, "was young Kranik running away?"

"Why, from me," she replied; and added, "You see, I was trying to persuade him to marry me."

The Ragusan gentleman blinked, and asked, after a moment of startled silence, "Is it customary for young American ladies of your generation to conduct these delicate matters for yourselves?"

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"No more than always," she said, "only we're franker about it, nowadays. . . . However, I'm not a typical American young lady."

"No? The Russian name ——"

"Stage-setting," she explained, "*nom de guerre*. I was named for my maiden Aunt Sophia, and of course one had to do something about that. At the time I was going in heavily for Russia, too—so many of us were, just then, especially in the neighborhood of Boston; a sort of reaction against the Puritan strain, I dare say. Soviet stuff, communistic living, love without bondage, all that sort of thing. Nothing very active, of course, just theory. Most of us were only what is called Parlor Pinks. That's how I came to know Nicholas first, at a Socialist club."

"Ah!" said the baron, with a little frown of comprehension. "I recall that the boy was of rather radical tendency. One hoped that time and a little success might cure him."

"As it usually does," she admitted, "especially if one wants children. Marriage and all that may be rather outmoded, to advanced minds, but up to date it does seem the only practical method of continuing the race, doesn't it?"

The startled gentleman wondered, but dared not ask, whether to the advanced minds of her contemporaries the ways of nature had also become outmoded. "So," he said, after a pause, "this fortunate young fellow has but to make the bee-call for you."

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"The bee-call?" she questioned.

"In our country, when we hive the bees, it is our custom to coax the queen a little, saying to her: '*U kućicu maiko*'—'Come into the hive, little mother.' And if this Niko said to you, '*U kućicu maiko*,' you would come?"

"With pleasure, Baron. But"—she smiled her faint, unmirthful smile—"since he declines under any circumstances to make the bee-call, even now that I've damaged my maiden reputation by running after him like this, what more can a poor girl do? I've given up. Only please," she added, with sudden earnestness, "*don't* let him stay away from America because of me, will you? Make him go back and try again, you who are his friend!"

Baron Sverlja began to feel stirrings of sympathy. Niko, the shrewd young rascal, was making, no doubt, a wise escape from entanglement that threatened his liberty. Yet, stealing a look sideways at this very feminine young creature, so gently bred, so disarmingly candid in her comments upon subjects not usually discussed thus freely between the generations, something in the clarity of her gaze, with its almost masculine straightforwardness, stirred in him a certain loneliness, a certain discontent with life as he knew it. It occurred to Baron Sverlja that had the marriageable young women of his day been more like this one, he might have been less unwilling to forego his bachelorhood.

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Something she had said caught his attention. "Why," he asked, thoughtfully, "should Nikola wish to stay away from America? He has not, then, been quite the success we have thought him here?"

She said: "It would be rather difficult for a man of his type to make a great success in America, I think, without influence, without some help—which Nicholas won't take. Not from me, at least."

"Ah! Help," warned the Ragusan, "is a dangerous thing for a woman to offer a man she loves, my dear young lady! Especially if he be a Serbian man. You have heard, perhaps, the old saying, 'Proud as a peasant'? Pride, do you see, is a salient characteristic of our people. It is the one possession of which even our peasants have not been deprived. They were never serfs."

"And that," she said, "is one of the reasons why I have wanted to marry Nicholas Kranik—because of his marked difference from the type of European that comes to us seeking what he may devour."

The baron murmured soothingly, sensing tears in the controlled, light voice, "Ah, but surely there must be many nice young men of your own country who are not proud as peasants?"

"Too many," she said, with a sorry laugh. "Very nice young men, not proud at all. The habit of prosperity, I'm afraid, has rather emasculated us. Perhaps the lack of it may set things straight again—but too late for me,

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you see. I'll just have to go on creating for myself the sort of men my sort of woman needs—

'None other than a moving row  
Of magic shadow-shapes—'

"Creating— You speak," said the bewildered gentleman, "like God, madam! Who are you, then? This name, Sonya Endicott"—he spoke with mounting curiosity—"one finds it, now that I repeat it, not entirely unfamiliar."

"I dare say not," she shrugged, "if one reads much light contemporary English. I've been translated into Italian a little, too; but not as yet into Serbo-Croat, I think, unless, perhaps, for the cinema."

"You mean," he demanded, gazing at the slim girl's figure, the smooth, pale patina of the skin, all the pliant and vital youth of her, "that you are already, at your age, a published author—an accepted writer of books?"

"Oh dear, yes, quite a lot of them. About one a year ever since I left college. There isn't any age-limit with us, you know, for mental agility; and literature happens to be a family gesture. That is, if you call my sort of thing 'literature,'" she added, impartially. "Some don't."

To her surprise, her companion rose and saluted her profoundly; not with the indulgent deference of an elder to a pretty girl, nor with the instinctive courtesy with which he had recognized her as one of his own social rank, but with deep respect. "Dalmatia welcomes

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you," he said as simply as Danitza had said it. "As for that blind young fool of a Nikola—! But now we must make you a proper celebration here, a true Slava; no more of this idle dancing and drinking— Hola! Anté! Yozhé, the lot of you, come!"

Accustomed though she was to her share of public acclaim, Sonya Endicott found herself rather embarrassed by the attention which was suddenly focused upon her. All pretense of proper indifference to a stranger disappeared, while the Kraniks and their guests crowded around to do her honor. The dancing stopped, nothing would do but that old Anté bring out his *gouslé* and sing for this bard of another race the *pesmé*, those old hero songs which have kept alive the long-oppressed soul of the Serbian people. "Dead," they say, "is the house where the *gouslé* is not heard."

It made for Sonya an unforgettable picture: the rapt old face of the bard, illumined by his simple muse, against a background of other broad, dark Slavic faces; below, the crenellated walls of their ancient, undefeated stronghold set against a quiet sea that reflected as in a mirror what was left of the day's light.

Anté, the one-stringed carven instrument laid flat across his knees, droned upon it a monotonous accompaniment to endless verses, each line repeated twice. What he sang were hero-tales long known to his audience, yet ever new in the telling: the tragedy of Kossovo Field, never permitted to be forgotten in song or story; the deed of noble Milosh Obilich, who, seeing defeat

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inevitable, entered alone by stealth into the tent of the Turkish Sultan and slew him there, ere he in turn was slain; the devotion of that Serbian mother who, warned by a raven's croaking, went out among the dead of Kossovo Field and found her nine sons and their father, one by one, and died of grief beside the piled up corpses. Changing his mood, Anté sang of the bold, free life of his *heidouc* ancestry, those Robin Hoods of the Hercegovina hills who never submitted to Turkish rule and so became bandits by profession, constantly harrying the conquerors, robbing the rich to aid the poor, stealing young wives away from lecherous old husbands; and his listeners shouted the wild refrains, stamping their feet, until tears of pleasure rolled down cheeks already wet with other tears.

When darkness fell at last, those who were left of the Slava guests adjourned to the courtyard table for final refreshment; and by the light of stars pricking the blue Adriatic dusk, began the inevitable storytelling of all peasant festivals. Each in turn was expected to contribute something: old folk tales, stark and simple and grim, of forest magic, of Zmay the dragon, and Vook the wolf, and of the wood-witches, sometimes friendly to man and sometimes not, such as the *vila* who fell in love with a human hero and became jealous of his bride, Rosanda, so that she put an evil spell on all the valley where they lived. The hero, seeing that something must be done to save his neighborhood, consented to the *vila's* demand that he wall his

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beloved bride-wife up alive, his brothers helping, and Rosanda making, of course, no protest since it was a husband's right to do with her as he willed. Only, since she was at the time nursing a young child, she begged that the infant be brought to her, while the wall was built around her, that she might continue to give it the breast as long as possible. So even when the wall mounted higher than her head, she nursed her child through an aperture that had been left for the purpose; and for many days thereafter they could hear her voice murmuring comfort to the child when it was brought to her, faintly and yet more faintly; and to this day a little stream of moisture flows always through rocks there, so that mothers of Montenegro who cannot nurse their young come to that place at Skadar to be made whole.

When it came Sonya's turn, she whose business was the telling of tales could think, absurdly enough, of no American folk-legend, except the story of Washington and the cherry-tree; but this the company received with rapt attention and many murmurs of approval.

"It was," declared one, "the act of a true falcon, a hero-boy!"

"Nevertheless," demurred another, "the hero-boy did wrongly, very wrongly, to destroy a tree which was not his tree; nor are good cherries to be plucked from every bough. The young falcon deserved his punishment."

Baron Sverlja's story, told despite Danitza's embar-



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rassed protests, was the one he had promised Sonya, about the Maika's shaking hands.

It chanced, he said, that Anté was away on Austria's wars, together with all the other able-bodied men of the Trebinje neighborhood, leaving there only old men and young boys and priests, who were no good at fighting. Danitza was farming their *dollina* alone, except for an old pauper man who was their pensioner, and for a son of Anté's first marriage, who happened to be a little weak in the wits.

"But very strong in the arms, *Padrone*, and always so laughing, like a good little child," put in Danitza, who had loved her stepson.

On a certain market day, the old man and the half-witted youth had gone in to Trebinje with eggs and cabbages to sell, riding, the two of them, on a strong white horse Anté had got cheaply because its wind was broken. When they did not return by nightfall, Danitza, having heard sounds of shooting earlier, became uneasy, as women will at the sound of shooting; and as soon as dawn broke she harnessed the two plow oxen to the cart, and put her five young children into the cart, since the oldest, Nikola, was hardly old enough to look after the others, and started off toward Trebinje. The first thing she saw when she came into the town was their strong white horse lying in a ditch, already stiff with death; and she began to weep, for they had no other. But when she came farther into the town she stopped weeping. It was so still there; she saw no peo-

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ple on the street; only one of the soldiers from the fort above marched up and down, up and down, as if on sentry duty. The marketplace was deserted, even the open square where people sit always for coffee beneath the linden-trees. As she passed the house of a woman whom she knew, a low voice called to her from behind a window shutter: "Go home, Kranik Danitza—turn about and take your children quickly home!"

"But what," Danitza wished to know, "has happened, then?"

"Look," said the voice. "Have you not seen? There, in the square."

Then Danitza saw that from the trees above the tables where no coffee drinkers sat that day, strange things were hanging, black objects which turned and twisted in the summer breeze as if still alive. There had been, said the low voice from the window shutter, a demonstration again; some would-be patriot, drunk no doubt with too much new *rakija*, had called out: "Down with the Austrian swine-dogs!" and a cabbage had struck in the face a passing officer, and some one had laughed, a pleased, foolish giggle like an idiot's; and then came the shooting.

Danitza's lip drew up until one could see the teeth. So that, she thought, was what had happened to their strong white horse. . . .

"Come," she said to the woman behind the shutter, "come now, and help me, for we must take them down. The flies are gathering."

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But the woman behind the shutter was afraid. "No, no! We have been forbidden to touch them. The soldier is mounting guard."

So Danitza put her children out of the ox-cart, all except Nikola, who was strong for his nine years and very nimble, and she drove the stolid oxen in where horses would not have gone, beneath those hanging figures; and when she came to the first, which was the body of the village pope, all in his priestly raiment, she bade young Niko climb up into the linden-tree and cut the rope with his claspknife, so that she could ease the body down into the ox-cart. So she did for each of five others; and the third was the body of their old pensioner, and the last was the body of Anté's witless son, he who was always laughing. And all the time the sentry on duty marched up and down, up and down, as if he noticed nothing; for while he was an Austrian soldier, he was also a Serbian man. And when Danitza had her cart as full as it would hold, she drove it over across the marketplace to the churchyard, where by that time other people, having become ashamed, were gathered to bury their dead. Then Danitza took all her children into the cart again, and drove back to her home. But never since had she been able quite to stop the trembling of her hands; which was a bad business for a young farm wife who had her cattle to milk and her fields to plow in the husband's absence.

When the *padrone* finished this story no one began

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another, nor were there any comments, except that Sonya said, very low in English, to Nikola beside her:

"And this is the sort of mother you are too proud to share with me?"

It was full night at last, and the guttering Slava candle was extinguished in wine and laid aside to light the candle for another Slava day; and what guests remained shared the burnt wine with the family, and blessed one another, making the cross with three fingers, and went away. Even the baron went, and no one was left except Sonya, who said that she must be going, too, since her boat sailed for Venice quite early in the morning.

"Eh, my child," exclaimed the Maika, her fears coming into unpremeditated speech, "you leave us, then? But why is this? Why can you not stay and let us make the *ispit* for you and Niko—even the marriage feast, together with our Toushka's, since you have not parents of your own, and a double marriage costs no more than a single one?"

"Why indeed?" shrugged the girl. "Ask Nicholas. Perhaps he has some good reason to give you, Maika. I have none."

Danitza looked from one to the other, her son remaining silent. "You tell me," she said, incredulous, "that it is Niko, our boy, who does not wish— But how is this?" she demanded, sternly; and then, the only possible explanation occurring to her, she asked, with troubled

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gravity: "My child, you have lost your *devishto*? You are no longer virtuous?"

"Mother!" protested Nikola, angrily. But Sonya Endicott silenced him with a gesture. Whatever may have been her somewhat emancipated views on what constitutes and does not constitute virtue, she was glad enough to be able to meet the searching, intent, anxious gaze of this old peasant woman without flinching. The gaze relaxed.

"It is well," Danitza said, in relief, as if the other had spoken. "For in this one thing our men are most strict; no Serb takes willingly to wife a maid who is not pure. There is, then, some other reason. Eh, my son, is it as I have feared, that you were wrong, that in new America, even as with us, people are born *gospod* or born peasant, and always the barrier between?"

"But not an insurmountable barrier!" put in the girl, quickly. "That is what Nicholas doesn't understand. Why, there's hardly a family in America, my own or any other, that would not find peasant blood if it cared to go back far enough! One generation, ten generations, what matter? That is America's great strength; as it is yours. Even in this much older land, are there not constant reversals of the social order, now up, now down? Isn't your king himself the grandson of a swineherd?"

"Of a swine-dealer," corrected Danitza, respectfully. "It is a very great difference!"

The American girl laughed. "Just about the same difference as you will find in our degrees of society—out

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of any one of which a king may be born at any moment. Or at least a President."

Kranik watched her, this daughter of what she had so conservatively called "the conservative Endicotts," vehemently denying her birthright for his sake; and loved her for it quite unbearably, and shook his head. He had long since outgrown such radical sophistries as the idea that all men are born free and equal anywhere.

"You know," he said, speaking for the first time, "that class distinctions exist in your country other than birth, my Sonya."

"You mean wealth," she said, with scornful directness. "Don't try to tell me that money means any more to you than it does to me! Except, of course, as a convenience."

"Which you," he reminded her, "have never happened to be without."

"So," asked the Maika, watching both of them, "the girl's family is *not* poor, my son, and is unwilling, therefore, to give her to us, who are?"

Sonya said, with a quick little lift of the chin, that in her country parents rather lost rights of dictatorship over offspring who had long earned their economic independence. "Besides, my family are not, and never were, so rich as all that!"

"It is not wealth," Nicholas tried to explain to his mother's bewilderment, "that makes the *gospod* class of America, so much as—" He broke off helplessly. How to make them understand, these two so different women

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who believed in him, his growing dismay with the American worship of the god Success; his chagrin, he who had gone over to a new world so eager with plans for the building of its future, only to discover that it was not, after all, a world new enough to need help from him, or even greatly to desire it?

"But, my son," said the Maika with her simple instinct for reading thoughts, "have you not, yourself, become of their *gospod* class, you who win prizes for architecture, and have your name printed in the public news sheets?"

"Please—" he winced. This event, which occurred some five or six years ago, had not repeated itself. However, it was to his mother so great a thing that instead of earning his living with his hands he had been earning it as one of the minor draughtsmen in a construction office, that he could not find heart to tell her how even this modest measure of success had been lost to him through the omnipresent *kriza*.

"And if," went on the Maika, in loving reproach, "you had but put your prize money in the bank, as Anté wished, and added to it from time to time out of your earnings, instead of sending us each month money we could so well have done without, there would be enough now for a marriage settlement to offer without shame, even for a rich man's daughter!"

"Maika," he said, seeing that he must speak to her in the terms she best understood, "what will you say if I tell you that Sonya here earns more money, with some

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little romance which it takes her perhaps a week to write, than a man like me is able to earn in a full year?"

"Absurd! I never wrote a story in a week in all my life," protested Sonya. "It takes at least three."

Danitza, while pleased with this information, was not unduly impressed, as it is common knowledge among Serbs that their own beloved poet Obradović habitually received for any manuscript of his its literal weight in gold. True, the weight of manuscript poetry is perhaps not great. But to have a wife that was already so good a wage-earner would be a very fine thing for her Nikola, especially in these bad times. She said as much.

"And do you imagine, you silly old *baba*," he cried out, tried beyond patience, "that I, while I have my body of a man, will ever depend for help on any woman?"

The Maika's eye met Sonya's with a droll little private twinkle, which said as one woman to another: "Eh, these men. These foolish zanies who imagine that they do not depend upon our help from the cradle up!" Nevertheless, she began to realize that for a bride who was so good a wage-earner, more would doubtless be expected in the way of settlements than the Kranik family could possibly provide. It seemed that the height of her ambition, such a marriage as this for the beloved son who should have been born a gentleman, was within their reach; yet they must let it pass.

"Eh, my poor little one!" she murmured, sorrowfully. "If we could but restore to you now some of all



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those moneys you have sent to us, if we might even make another mortgage on the *domachia*—! But with Yozhé's share in the business, and Toushka's wedding portion, and the customers so often unable to pay except in kind ——”

“You see,” said Nikola to Sonya, with a helpless gesture, “how impossible it is to make them understand, my people? To make them think in any terms other than dollars and cents? Especially cents. . . . Will you go now, please? I cannot stand any more of it.”

So they went away together, the mother watching as far as she could see them in the starlight, moving slowly and yet more slowly down the steep cliff stairs toward the hotel below. Then she looked across at the city's saint, in his niche opposite, with some reproach. It seemed to her that their spiritual guardian was failing in his duty, that he no longer cast such a good shadow on their house. She turned her back on Sveta Vlaho, and lifted her eyes for comfort to that other ghostly presence set high above, with hoary branches outlined against the shining night, as to a more dependable earthly guardian. . . .

Sonya at the shadowed gate of the hotel grounds bade her lover good-by. “No, don't come into the lights. I'm crying,” she said. “Besides, you couldn't kiss me there. And don't come to the ship in the morning to see me off, or I mightn't go. Just be standing high up beside the *genius loci*, will you?—so that I will know where to look for you as we sail out. . . . You're really

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going to stay on here, then, going to acknowledge yourself beaten?"

"Beaten? No," he said. "Only winded and wanting a fresh start." She remembered what Baron Sverlja had told her about Serbs needing to touch their earth now and again, like the giant Antæus. "Some day America will want me yet—if not my wits, then my two good hands." He looked at them as he spoke, and so did she. They were very good hands, big, square, sensitive, with spatulate artist's finger tips; not the sort of hands that let go easily. "Meanwhile I've got my old trade as a mason. It will take care of me—long enough, at least, for you to forget me, Sonya."

"That will be rather long, my dear."

"Perhaps not," he said, smiling without bitterness. "You'll soon be putting me into a story, I think."

"Shall I? And you will be putting me into everything you build, walling me up alive like that girl Rosanda in the Montenegrin tale—" They looked at each other, remembering the rest of it. "Oh, my dear, my dear," she whispered, her cheek against his throat, "are you really going to let our chance of happiness sail away on that boat for Venice? Are you?"

"Would you care," he asked, stoically, "to make a fresh start in life in my mother's clean-room, say—family crayons, goose-feather pillows, and all?" As he spoke, a picture was in his mind of Sonya's New York pent-house, cool spaces done in subtly varying shades of white, gleaming surfaces of chromium metal, dull

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ebony floors—all, like Sonya herself, very much of her generation.

"I'm afraid I couldn't—such an overstuffed little house already! But why on earth should I?" she demanded.

"Because the wages of a stone-mason in Dalmatia are even less," he replied, "than the present salary of an architect's draughtsman in New York."

She sent him from her, at last, out of sheer exhaustion; and he went to bed in the parlor that was also a guest-chamber, but not to sleep; for in the room above he could hear for a long time afterwards his mother's murmuring voice, and his father's drowsy answers. And presently, great child that he was for all his brawn and his brain and his thirty-odd years of living, Nikola wept a little into his pillow to know that never would he lie so beside his wife in the homely dark, talking over together, as old mates do, the happenings of a day.

Because of sleeping so little in the night, he overslept in the morning, and woke with a start, remembering why he should have wakened earlier. The Venice boat would soon be passing. As he dressed he became aware of a sound which he had been hearing subconsciously since early dawn, even in sleep—the staccato thud of axes upon wood, the long-drawn-out whining of a saw. Looking in surprise to see what such sounds meant—for it is some centuries since there has been any forest left about the ancient Forest City—he saw his father and all his brothers and some neighbor men on the upper

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terrace, with ropes and tackle, gathered about the giant plane-tree. Even as he stared the topmost branches shivered a little, ominously.

Yes, they had sold it, explained Anté, divided between complacence and regret; sold it, on his mother's urgent counsel, to the house-builder, Rasić, while the offer for it still held good. This was no time to risk letting such a fortune rot where it stood in the ground, doing no good to anybody.

The gangplank of the Venice boat was just about to be drawn in when Miss Endicott stopped it imperiously, having seen who came running along the pier.

"Oh, my dear—not your mother's tree, not the *genius loci*!" she cried, when he told her what had happened: "But why? Why?"

"In order that you and I may build," explained Nikola, unsteadily, "a little *domachia* of our own, it seems."

"Nick! You can't, you would not dare refuse such a sacrifice as this!"

He said, trying to smile at her, that it was too late to refuse, the tree was already down. . . .

Truly an ambitious woman, Maika Danitza.

# THE HOUSE ORAŠAC







## II

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THEIR borrowed villa rose from the edge of a quiet water where tall ships rotted at anchor, awaiting a tide which had long since ceased to bear them out into familiar seaways and the far marts of men. At the head of this inlet a sunken river, lost for many miles under the porous *krst*, bubbled up a perpetual limpid purity to mingle with the half-stagnant brine, so that always a little nimble air stirred about the place, as about any moving water. It came to seem rather symbolical to Alan and Astaire, that river Rijeka; always fresh life rushing down out of sun-bleak hills, under the barren Dalmatian rock.

Deep summer held the region in a haze of solitude,

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the old peninsula houses for the most part deserted in their jungles of azalea and palm and clambering lantana. Only one near their own, directly across the inlet, showed any sign of life, and that a not very active life; lights at evening in one or two of the Venetian Gothic windows, jealously shrouded by day in curtains of a rare jade-blue brocade, the latter observed by Astaire with covetous eyes, she being a decorator by profession. At the back, sentry cypresses lifted clustering spears to guard the house from sight of a climbing road against the cliff. But more than once, lingering along that road, the two were able to glimpse a woman's figure moving, slender and erect, among the paths of a sunken garden whose wall was also the sea-wall; accompanied usually by a sturdier, more supple figure, the russet gleam of whose uncovered head in the sun suggested youth.

This establishment, informed their villa's caretaker, Poldka, was the house Orašac, home of the Gospodja Ivana Stanić; once habituée of courts and the polite world, now for some thirty years a recluse within the walls of her ancestral *zamak*.

"A recluse? Why?" demanded Astaire.

Poldka, however, being Serb by heritage and nature, was not given to the unnecessary answering of questions.

"And the red-headed girl," persisted Astaire, albeit slightly dashed, "is she the recluse's daughter?"

"Gospodja Ivana has not married. Annushka is her orphan."

"Oh!—a sort of maid, do you mean, or companion?"



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"Annushka," repeated Poldka, firmly, "is the Gospodja's orphan"—as if to be an orphan were sufficient avocation in itself.

"Hohum!" murmured Astaire, with interest. "I must remember to ask our Baron about this."

The gentleman in question happened to be their first friend in the neighborhood, acquaintance with whom, begun auspiciously, had ripened into intimacy in record time. The two young Americans had arrived in Dalmatia on a gala day, rather an exceptional gala, since everywhere there was dancing on the threshing-floors in honor of the Virgin Mary's visit to Saint Elizabeth. The boat which met their ship—a species of motor-vessel transformed out of an ordinary fishing-boat by means of a somewhat temperamental engine—put-putted its way along the shores with obliging slowness, and came to almost a full stop opposite a certain beach where some vividly embroidered youths and many-petticoated maidens were whirling a lively *kolo* circle. Near by a young lamb, impaled full length upon a spit, roasted odorously above a bed of coals. Over these revels presided a stoutish middle-aged gentleman, not in peasant dress, whose heavy shock of hair and fluent side-whiskers, at one time of a bright russet cast, were now well streaked with gray. While they looked, this gentleman himself entered the circle to tread a measure or two, quite nimbly.

"One has here," informed their boat-boy—a youth of fourteen years or so, whose English showed the effect

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of the growing tourist traffic—"a property of our *gospod*, Baron Sverlja, who roasts each year a lamb at this season to celebrate Sveta Elisabet."

"A baron?" said Astaire. "I didn't suppose they had nobles in Jugoslavia; thought they went in more for picturesque peasantry, and soldiery, and bandits, and all that sort of thing."

"Don't you know," informed Alan, having surreptitiously consulted his pocket guidebook, "that the ancient merchant princes of Ragusa vied in splendor and world-importance with those of Genoa, of Venice? Wherever wealth accumulates long enough, there," he explained, sapiently, "an aristocracy is certain to arise, my dear. The usual case of cultivation following commodities."

"Well, well! Fancy," murmured Astaire, impressed, "our Mr. Rockefeller footing it with the merry villagers! But I suppose that, too, will come as we grow more commodious and aristocratic. . . . The noble doesn't seem to be a very swanky one, does he? Handsome enough, but a bit unpressed and shaggy, like a good Airedale that needs clipping." As she spoke, the odor of roasting lamb assailed her nostrils and she sniffed it pleasurably.

Observing this, their boat-boy, whose name was Janko, inquired hopefully whether the *gospari* might care to go ashore for a while? Their *barun*, he said, was not in the least particular whom he entertained, being one who wished well to all, especially if ladies. Indeed, that gentleman, having observed the passing gray-eyed,

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sunbrown loveliness that was Astaire, had already left off his dancing and come down to the water's edge to bow receptively: Dalmatia saluting America.

America returned the salute. "Alan, do you suppose ——"

"I do not," he interrupted. "Kindly remember you're a married woman now, my girl! Just another of these damn wops trying to make you; old enough to know better, too. On your way, Janko."

"But," was her plaintive protest, "we've never before had an ancient merchant prince of Ragusa welcome us in with gently smiling jaws. And Dalmatians aren't really Italians any more, darling, nor even Latins. They're Slavs; a race *much* less susceptible."

"Oh, yeah? A wop by any other name ——"

"Alan!" she said, with dignity. "If you must be vulgar, pray wait until there are no children present." Her eye flickered toward the boy Janko, who, having become a full-fledged waterman at the age of eight, wondered a little where the children were.

Progress resumed itself until they reached at last a pair of rusted gates in a granite sea-wall, behind which marble steps rose, mossy with age.

"My word!" breathed the girl, gazing raptly at the tall, stained façade above them, "this is no villa Ferguson's lent us; it's a castle! A Doge's palace, right out of one of the back canals of Venice. Oh, boy!"—she pinched herself, also her companion, to make sure they

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were not dreaming—"isn't this too utterly jake for words?"

He admitted its apparent jakeness. "But don't worry, oh, girl! There'll be something wrong; you know our Fergie. Probably the plumbing."

She besought him with passion to shut up. "Who needs plumbing, with the Adriatic lapping our very doorstep?"

Not until the second rapturous round of the domain fortuitously supplied by a prosperous painter friend for honeymooning purposes, was the fly in the ointment made manifest. Their gift-house included transportation of sorts, as promised by Ferguson; a pair of servants—Janko, and Poldka, who was his grandmother; a thriving vegetable patch; a pig—which at least solved, as Alan pointed out, the garbage problem—but apparently nothing else of a usable variety; merely some items in the way of headless statuary, worm-eaten chests, rickety benches, and the like, the sort of furnishing painters in search of atmosphere accumulate about themselves wherever they take temporary root. Beds in particular were conspicuous by their absence.

Others than Alan and Astaire might have been somewhat disconcerted by this discovery; they, being as they were, merely grinned. "So that's what the bally old ass was remembering to tell us at the last minute, when he went galloping along the pier making a megaphone of his hands! The mere detail of beds would naturally have escaped his memory; he probably made himself

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quite comfortable at the nearest hostelry. It looks, my fair young bride," said Alan, cheerily, "as if we'd better sally forth and do a little furniture shopping."

"What with, my dark young groom?" succinctly demanded Astaire.

Here Poldka, a wary old *donna di servizio*, who had been following the conversation with the silent attention of one who strives to master an unfamiliar language with the eyes, inquired doubtfully whether the young *gospari* expected to occupy the *zamak*, actually to eat and sleep in it.

"Why not?" asked Astaire, looking around suspiciously. "Are there ghosts, perhaps?"

The caretaker replied practically that it was less because of Those Who Return that foreigners who rented the *zamak* rarely occupied it long, than because of dampness when the sea came occasionally into the house. Many English appeared to be afflicted with an aching in the bones if there was weather. Then there was the matter of the walls, which since the last earthquake were apt to tremble a little in a high wind—she indicated a crack in the masonry above them—although so far only one of the less important wings had fallen down. Also, she added, casually, the last plague had given the place rather a sinister reputation—"Sixteen of one family, eleven corpses in one day. *Ma, che brutta cosa!*—no?"

Astaire agreed that it was indeed a hard thing. "And

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how long ago," she inquired, moistening her lips, "did this little catastrophe occur?"

The caretaker, who seemed to have quite a flair for history, replied, after intensive calculation on her fingers, that it must have been in the year seventeen hundred or thereabouts, during the same general period as the earthquake.

The pair heaved a sigh of relief. "Even the great-great-grandsons of those mediæval germs must have succumbed by this time, don't you think? As for the walls—You'll be able to shore them up somehow, Alan!" said his bride, trustfully. "At least so they'll last out the summer. The burning question before us is how little furniture will two people in a Dalmatian *zamak* be able to get on with? A mattress at least, I suppose, and a table, and a chair or two ——"

"Surely," protested Alan, "one chair ought to be quite enough for you and me?"

"And guests could sit on the floor, of course! Clever of you, darling. Parties always go so much better when people sit on the floor."

Here something wary and slightly inimical began to fade from the caretaker's manner. It was not the first time she had been rented out, with her *zamak*, to mad English; but apparently the American type were even madder. So young, too ——

They saw that the moment had come to take her into fullest confidence, and inquired where two impoverished refugees from a depression, a new-fledged architect and

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a young lady decorator out of a job, who were dependent upon charity for the very roof over their heads, were to find the barest possible necessities for light house-keeping, at the smallest possible expense?

Poldka's manner relaxed into near-maternity. Poor, and American, she exclaimed, incredulous. Refugees? Dependent upon charity? But let the young *gospari* not despair, they had fallen among friends. For those who lacked, the Dio Bonnino would most certainly provide. She hurried from the room.

They heard her loudly calling upon some one, presumably the Dio Bonnino, who answered from parts unseen. Much fluent conversation ensued, in a guttural staccato that was not Italian; then a spasmodic, familiar, put-put-a-put retreated into the near distance.

"'Let the young *gospari* not despair; for those who lack, the good little God will certainly provide.' . . . We must take it for our life motto, darling," suggested Astaire, slipping a contented hand into her husband's arm. "They've had rather a snap of it here, of course, she and her grandson and the pig, with nothing to bother about except a few germs and earthquakes, and 'Those Who Return'—no wonder Poldka makes a point of discouraging prospective occupants! But somehow I feel that our truly desperate situation has made another ally of her. Good old depression! How we are going to miss it when it's gone!"

Some time later the pair, sharing their first Dalmatian meal in the open loggia—rather an odd little meal,

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of forcemeat wrapped in soured cabbage leaves, sugared fish, a pastry filled with a mixture of cheese and spinach—observed a species of marine procession rounding the corner of the promontory opposite. In the lead they recognized by its voice their returning motor-boat, with two lesser craft in tow; all three laden to the gunwales with assorted chairs, tables, mattresses, and the like. In the last boat a gentleman—unmistakably a gentleman, even at that distance—took his ease under the shade of what appeared to be a tester-bed canopy.

"Am I wrong," said Alan, interestedly, "or is Poldka's Dio Bonnino already on the job?"

"The whiskers," commented Astaire, "seem to be hardly white enough for Deity in person. Why, it's our nimble noble!"

Poldka, at their elbow, gave a grunt of gratification. "See Providence," she said, approvingly. "Already arrives our *barun* to make respects; I had thought that he would not long delay." Her eye traveled with significant appreciation over the lissome form of Astaire.

"I, too," said Alan, grimly. "But where on earth did your grandson make such a haul? Has he been robbing a house, or anything?"

Janko, protested Poldka, was a most honest boy; he robbed nobody; only their *barun* had many more of such things than were requisite. "Can a man eat from more than one board at a time, sleep at a time on more than one good bed? Eh, no! Especially," she added, reasonably, "if a bachelor man." Therefore she had



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sent Janko to borrow what was necessary from the *barun's* housekeeper.

Their caller, smartened up for the occasion with spats and a flower in his rather shabby buttonhole, proved most amiable of manner, protesting his pleasure in being of any slight service to them; a service whose odd nature he seemed to take entirely for granted. "What is a little furniture among neighbors? Your servant should have asked for more. A tapestry to cover that mildew on the wall, perhaps—a Persian carpet for the cold tiles—a little pianoforte for mademoiselle's music—or is it 'madame's' music? But 'madame', of course!—You are American. That sees itself. My felicitations!" he bowed. Alan bowed. "Arcady itself, your country," he murmured. "A nation of youth incarnate! Again my felicitations."

"A cynical old bird," frowned Alan, when their helpful visitor had left. "'Mademoiselle,' indeed! What do you suppose he thought?"

"Oh, what Europeans usually do think; the world well lost for love, etc. They can't seem to conceive of lovers being respectably married to each other. But, my word, Alan, imagine having tapestries and pianos and Persian carpets to lend about the neighborhood, to say nothing of tester-beds! What is he, Poldka, a collector? An antiquarian? Has he got some sort of decorator's shop hereabouts?" she demanded, hopefully.

Poldka stared. "A shop—our *barun*? But the Sverlja do not sell, *gospa*, they buy! It is a Salamancan family,

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one of the last remaining. Always, since Ragusa was, they have kept properties here—on Lapad, within the city walls, along the coast, everywhere. Always their ships have sailed, east, west, bringing home wealth and treasure for their fine *zamaks*; always their young men, having fought the wars of the world, return to grow old in peace. Rectors of our state have been chosen from such houses as the Sverlja; counselors of kings, friends of kings. Now not many are left on the great properties; our *barun* alone of his name, a few others only. But the estates remain. No, *gospa*!—such do not sell; they buy.”

“My mistake,” murmured Astaire, abashed by this lyrical outburst. “Do you mean that this Baron Sverlja is literally the last of his family? There are no children?”

“Our *barun*,” reminded Poldka, in a tone of reproof, “has not married, *gospa*.”

“Like the recluse lady over yonder,” commented Alan, thoughtfully. “Seems to run in the neighborhood. I wonder why! What has become of all the other—what did you call them—Salamancan families? Have they lost their wealth? Have they gone away to live?”

“No, *gospod*; our Ragusan nobles do not lose their wealth, nor do they go away from their homes to live.” She made the expressive peasant gesture of thumb over shoulder toward the slender bulbous tower of a Dalmatian church in the near distance. “All,” she said, “are there.”

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It explained a quality the two had sensed from the first in this remote green solitude beyond the walls of the busy little fortress city of Dubrovnik—something not so much sinister as wistful, faintly elegiac, as if life had already passed on elsewhere.

Here there was laughter once, there was weeping  
Haply of lovers we never shall know,  
Whose eyes went seaward, a hundred sleeping  
Years ago. . . .

They were fond of quoting this to each other, having culled it out of some guidebook about the Dalmatian Riviera.

"Darling," Astaire had said, on the first night in their empty, echoing shell of a sea castle, "let's be terribly happy here, quite especially happy! I feel as if it were our bread-and-butter duty, somehow. So that—well, so that they will understand. About the world going on; business as usual; 'Are we down-hearted? No!'—all that sort of thing; if you get what I mean?"

"Afraid I don't, quite. So that who will understand, Wonder-Eyes?"

"Why, 'Those Who Return,'" she quoted, under her breath.

"All right by me," said Alan, always willing to oblige. "Let's!"

Frequently, when the world had been well lost long enough, the two repaired for diversion to the town,

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about which there was nothing in the least other-world or elegiac; its white little ancient streets thronged constantly with foot traffic, foreign as well as native. In such excursions Baron Sverlja was more often than not their boon companion, his eagerness for their young company suggesting a certain loneliness not unusual in aging bachelors whose zest for life has outlived their claims upon it. The lovers could not begrudge him this pleasure. Even Alan soon reconciled himself to the Baron's indefatigable gallantries, his artful daily plots for their mutual enjoyment.

"After all, when you're sleeping in a man's borrowed bed, and eating off a man's borrowed table, out of a man's own dishes, you can't very well prohibit him from making a little love to your wife!" he conceded, largely.

"It's you he's after, darling, far more than me," she told him. "Haven't you noticed that bachelors of a certain age take the same sort of semi-proprietary interest in husky young males like you that suppressed old maids take in other people's babies?"

Alan nodded. "Men," he explained from the heights of his month-old marital experience, "need sons far more than women do, my girl—remember this!—because they can't in decency take on kittens instead. Or puppy dogs. Or scandals."

"Or orphan girls, like the Gospodja's—Not," she said, with dignity, "in the way I mean, at least. And you needn't grin like a Cheshire cat about it, either!"

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Under the gregarious guidance of their friend, they came to be on speaking terms with chance acquaintances of all classes, mostly encountered at a certain open-air café, high on the ramparts just beyond the city gates, where all the Dubrovnik world concentrates of an afternoon to drink *srbska* coffee thick as paste, at three cents the cup, with a great deal of unmodulated *srbska* band music thrown in. Here the débutantes of the vicinity make the usual European promenade—peasant girls in their full woolen skirts and bright embroideries and enormous pleated sleeves, city girls in their rather unmodish imitations of Western finery; while débutantes of seasons past trundle triumphant go-carts up and down, occasionally accompanied by self-glorious young fathers.

“‘Business as usual’ here, at least,” commented Alan. “Nothing Salamancan and decadent—cosmically speaking—about this quarter! . . . By the way,” he asked of a spectacled young native with whom they were drinking coffee that day in the rare absence of their usual guide and mentor, Baron Sverlja, “how does it happen that Dubrovnik’s first families came to be called Salamancans, anyway? The only Salamanca I know about is a Spanish city.” He had observed that in matters of local import, any convenient source one tapped was likely to give forth a spate of intelligent information.

The other, an earnest young man obviously desirous of improving his English on them, explained that in

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the early days of their republic, certain patrician houses from which the rulers of Ragusa were yearly chosen sent their sons to be educated at Salamanca, the greatest university of its time, conducted for sons of noble Catholic family.

"Why, but Spain is at the farther side of two oceans!"

What were a few oceans, shrugged the young man, to the rich Ragusan ship-owners? Later, he continued, when Ragusa came under French influence, certain prosperous citizens who followed the thought of the time began sending their sons to the Sorbonne, in Paris; which gave rise to much enmity between the two classes; Salamancans being forbidden to intermarry with the upstart heretic Sorbonnese, under penalty of losing their own patrician standing.

"Which naturally limited race-production. You seem," commented Alan, "to have taken your education rather seriously hereabouts."

All Serbs, said the earnest young man, took education seriously, because it was difficult to obtain. "Though we of Dubrovnik have been more fortunate than Serbs of other provinces, in that books were at least not forbidden us. We were, do you see, never a conquered people—only a betrayed one," he added, sententiously. "We trusted Napoleon—a mistake on the part of any country, as of any woman. It was France, our friend, who betrayed us into the 'protection' of Austria. And it was as protest against such a protection that the heads of thirty of those patrician families of which you speak

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—the Salamancans—decided finally to exterminate themselves.”

“You mean,” said Alan, rather startled, “that they committed suicide?”

“Individually, no, monsieur. The heads of those families merely agreed, men and women alike, never to marry, rather than to provide our oppressor, Austria, with any more Ragusan subjects. The Salamancans, whatever their faults, were always patriots.”

Astaire gave a little exclamation. “So that’s what has happened to all those empty Lapad houses! I suppose Baron Sverlja was one of those who entered the pact?”

The earnest young man explained that this patriotic gesture had occurred several generations earlier, during Austrian rule, and that all the Salamancans were not concerned in it. “Otherwise there would be no Baron Sverlja,” he explained, reasonably. “However, large families are no longer fashionable among our Ragusan patricians. That is why one finds left so few of the Salamancan names that formerly made history—DeBono, Gondola, Stanič, et cetera—and of the old Salamancan prestige, nothing at all.”

“Nor,” asked Alan, “of the old Salamancan blood?”

The other registered discretion. That, it appeared, was something else again. “Nature, you comprehend, is not, perhaps, so easily gainsaid. It was a vigorous stock.” He cast a deprecatory glance at the lady present.

“Oh, don’t apologize for Nature! I think all the

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better of her, myself, for carrying on," said that untrammelled young modern.

More at ease, the Serb enlarged upon his subject. "It is said that you will find among our *magstori*—our working classes—many aristocratic types, and more perhaps of physical beauty than in other Serb provinces; narrower hands and feet, finer hair. Also a certain quickened intelligence. I am myself," he added, with modest pride, "of the working class, although a school-teacher. Now, of course, distinctions of the sort are no longer recognized," he hastened to add. "Nobles, peasants, commercials, all are one, as with you of America; all Jugoslavs together."

Nevertheless, they could not but observe that as a lady in black passed their table, this ardent negator of class distinction and prestige rose automatically and stood uncovered, she acknowledging his act of deference in the courteous impersonal fashion with which ladies of her day and generation usually recognize politeness from a stranger. Several men at other tables did the same; while Alan, somewhat to his own surprise, found himself also standing. She was that sort of lady.

Astaire had known her at once. There was about the slender, erect carriage, the handsome costume sufficiently outdated to have come back almost into fashion, the cameo necklace clasped about a high-boned collar, the toque with its surrounding swirl of ostrich plume, a certain unmistakable distinction which suggested the imposing mansion opposite their own, behind its guard-



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ian cypresses and closely drawn brocades. Neither eccentricity nor poverty was indicated by the recluse's appearance; merely that serene indifference to passing styles peculiar to European women of high breeding.

"Portrait, from the Liechtenstein Gallery," murmured Astaire, *sotto voce*, "of H. R. H. The Archduchess Sophia von Whozis!"

"Not at all," corrected Alan, in the same tone. "Hardly dashing enough to be a Viennese, and much too Eastern. Only a Latin painter could do justice to eyes like that!"

The lady, corrected their literal-minded Serbian friend, was neither Austrian nor Latin, however, but their own Gospodja Ivana Stanić, come in from the house Orašac, as was her custom on one day of every month, to transact necessary affairs of her estate.

"What luck," remarked the American girl, "that we should happen to be on hand for the event! A châtelaine, Alan"—she indicated some heavy silver ornaments jingling at the lady's waist. "Did you dream there was a vinaigrette left in circulation? And that willow plume ——"

The face framed and dated by the plume wore, nevertheless, a look as of youth arrested, preserved intact by some kindly miracle for a quite long time. There was no suggestion of the spinster in it; rather of a detached virginity, gentle as a nun's, but far less humble. Pride was instinct in the high, delicate profile; the eyes, longer and more full than Italian eyes, had a

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calm and very Eastern beauty. Only the quiet lips were modeled subtly, poignantly, as no sculptor except Life can model a woman's mouth.

Beside this memorable face, the broad Slavic features of the younger woman were redeemed from plainness only by the look of eloquent protective devotion turned upon her companion. The girl carried herself with the free, supple grace of Dalmatian peasants. Massive braids of bright russet were wound around her head, under a somewhat incongruous modern hat. Red hair, observed Astaire, recalling the Baron's, made a rather striking combination with the dark Dalmatian coloring.

Three waiters at once, such was the galvanizing effect of this appearance, converged upon the lady's table, murmuring respectfully, "*Küss die Hand.*" A modest order was given, also in German—of a purity, free from gutturals, not often heard in these post-war days; a "white coffee" was brought with its accompanying brioche, the latter set down, at the Gospodja's request, in front of her companion.

"But yes, it is for you, certainly!" she insisted, in her soft, exquisite German. "I find myself not at all in appetite today, *liebchen*, whereas the young are always hungry, no? To waste the good little bread would be a sin. And when finished there is time for the promenade while I sit here. *Gewiss*, why not? How shall a dowerless young girl find for herself a good marriage, then, if the young men have never the chance to look her over? We must be sensible, Annushka."

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"But if I do not wish to marry— How could any marriage be good which would take me from you?" protested the girl, in low-toned vehemence.

"That," murmured the lady, "is a foolishness, my Annushka! What is there but marriage for a girl of your class—indeed, of any class—who has no religious vocation? Remember, even Our Lady married, child. I shall not live forever—that even you, *Gott sei dank*, cannot manage. And then— Eh, yes, we must be sensible. Therefore, since one has shyness, perhaps, to join the other maidens unaccompanied, it is I who shall make with you the promenade. Come, *liebchen*."

Make it she did, with apparent complete indifference to the staring of the townsfolk, although her cheeks went faintly pink under it; the slender-waisted figure gracefully upright, one gloved hand resting firmly on the arm of her companion—who might, thought Astaire, with some sympathy, have looked less painfully self-conscious in native costume. Annushka's broad young suppleness did not lend itself happily to Western fashions.

"How does it happen that they speak German?" Astaire asked the school-teacher, in surprise. "I thought everything suggesting Austria was taboo here now."

He explained in a low voice: "The Gospodja's father, Count Stanić, held high military office under the foreign domination, madame. The Gospodja prefers her German still out of a certain loyalty; perhaps out of a certain defiance, also. She finds it beneath dignity, no

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doubt, to use our native Serbo-Croat tongue, which many of our patricians regard as the speech of vulgar persons."

He spoke with some acidity; yet again it was he who, that strange little promenade finished, hurried forward to assist the lady of Orašac into a small old-fashioned coupé which waited at the curb, and who accepted without visible blenching the extremely modest coin bestowed upon him graciously for his pains. The watchers, however, saw that he had his reward in the shape of a fleet, parting smile from the girl Annushka; rather a personal little smile. It occurred to Astaire, with her sleuth-hound instinct for romance, that the recluse might be making somewhat more effort than was necessary to interest prospective suitors in her orphan charge.

She reported this significant bit of by-play to Poldka, their usual authority upon neighborhood matters; and the latter replied that it was indeed true, many young men, including the local school-teacher, had looked with favor upon Annushka, the color of whose hair indicated an ardent nature; but that it was unlikely any would really marry her.

"Why? Because she is dowerless, as I heard the Gospodja say? But surely she might settle something on Annushka herself, if she really wants her to marry."

The Gospodja, commented Poldka briefly, was not one to be giving away what was unnecessary.

"Yet she is obviously devoted to the girl. Why did

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she take her on in the first place unless she meant to provide for her future?"

Ah, that, said Poldka, was a matter of obligation; the Gospodja happened to be Annushka's *kuma*. To the other's curiosity she explained that the orphan as an infant had been laid on the doorstep of the Orašac private chapel, so that the first person to find it would be obliged to take it up, according to custom, have it baptized, and perform otherwise what was needful. The piety of the lady of Orašac being well known, it was easy to arrange that she herself be the first to find the child, thus becoming *kuma* to it—"What you call god-relative, no? So rich and generous a protector was of course greatly to be desired." And that, she concluded, was why Annushka would never consent to marry her school-teacher, excellent though the match was, the grateful orphan being unwilling to leave her benefactress. There was too much work to be done about the house Orašac.

"Work? But surely the Gospodja has plenty of servants for that?"

She had, informed Poldka, the occasional services of a tenant farmer, one Jefrem, who came in when necessary for the vines or garden, and who rented himself, with his plow-horse, to the Gospodja when she required to use her carriage, since he happened to fit the Orašac livery.

"Why, but the place is enormous! And so beautifully kept—windows and brasses gleaming in the sun, water-

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steps white as snow. Surely one lone girl couldn't manage all that!"

The Gospodja's orphan, said Poldka, staidly, was very strong and capable, and knew her duty.

A reluctant conviction forced itself upon Astaire—reluctant, for the Old World, stately elegance of the Ragusan lady had satisfied some unrealized need in her own smart New World modernity. She recalled the meagerness of the Gospodja's order at the café—one cup, with its brioche, served for two; she remembered the extreme modesty of her *pourboires*. "Only the really rich could afford to tip like that!" she had commented to Alan, at the time. Undoubtedly the recluse, living so long apart from her own kind, had formed one of those ugly little vices to which recluses are sometimes subject—she had become a miser. It upset the girl's favorite theory, a tenet indeed of her profession: that surroundings must both reflect and affect the character of those who live among them. Certainly so splendid an old aristocrat of a mansion should have induced in its mistress something finer than the ignoble trait of parsimony.

A later incident confirmed the disillusioning impression. Going in early one day to market, that they might see in full display the elaborate costumes of the peasant women—for market is the great social event of any Slav community—Alan and Astaire recognized the girl Annushka seated behind a tray of quaintly arranged bouquets of vegetables mixed with garden flowers, and little pots of what appeared to be some sort of

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preserved fruit. Astaire had been right in thinking the Gospodja's charge would appear to better advantage in native than in Western dress. In full-pleated skirt and crimson apron, a plain dark bodice edged with vivid embroideries, her smooth auburn braids surmounted by the flat little cap worn by Serbian men and women alike, in different colors, to indicate their native village, the Dalmatian girl had a fresh, young, comely dignity that was quite charming. They noticed that her tray was the first to need refilling; they also noticed that her best customer appeared to be their earnest acquaintance, the school-teacher, who returned several times for purchases; heralded on each occasion by an uncontrollable flush mounting the girl's dark cheek. Otherwise she paid neither more nor less attention to him than to other customers, such as Baron Sverlja, who seemed to be on his usual pleasantly familiar terms with her, and paused to exchange a bit of badinage while purchasing a boutonnière.

"Imagine, Alan, that selfish old recluse letting the poor girl peddle her little wares at market, in addition to doing all the work of that huge house! No doubt that's how all these haughty Salamancans got so rich—grinding down the faces of the poor." Astaire was up-to-date enough to rather fancy herself as a socialist, on occasion. "But, oh, the treasures she must have accumulated during all these years in her palatial retreat!—she who 'is not one to be giving away what is unnecessary.' My word, Alan, what wouldn't I give," she sighed, "to

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be able to worm my way in there, just for a peep at them!"

"You'll wangle it somehow, oh, you termite! What about approaching the Baron in the matter?"

This she had already done, without result. Their friend, for all his solicitude to give them pleasure, proved rather a cold trail where the house Orašac was concerned. Indeed, at the mention of the recluse, an odd little stiffness came into his manner, quite at variance with his usual amiable camaraderie.

"I have not myself visited there in many years. Stanić Ivana," he explained, using the formal Serbian order of the names, "no longer receives; occupying herself, like many of our Dalmatian ladies, entirely with religious and household affairs. No doubt my cousin would have entered religion after her father's death, had it not been for certain duties toward her godchild. My cousin," he added, quietly, "was always one to take a duty more seriously than needful."

Astaire pricked up attentive ears at the mention of the relationship. "I did not know the Gospodja was your cousin, Baron!"

"All of us here are cousins, more or less; you would find difficulty, *chère petite madame*, in disentangling the various relationships and interdependencies of a society that has so long occupied one small vicinity. Do you know that even your good Poldka," he added, "is in a way a member of my family?"

"Not our caretaker!" exclaimed Astaire the socialist,



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a trifle shocked. "I realized, of course, that she was no ordinary servant—she seems to know so much about everything! But I thought her some superior sort of *contadina* person."

"A peasant? Ah no, I doubt whether Poldka's people have lived on or by the soil for many generations. Hers is a sort of intermediate class, dependent upon us as we upon them, without which such feudal little aristocracies as our own could not exist. From that class come the trusted stewards of our estates; our housekeepers; our *maîtres d'hôtel*; the tyrants of our nurseries—whom our children love often better than their mothers—all our more intimate hereditary attendants."

"Such as the Gospodja's orphan?" suggested Astaire, interested.

"The parentage of my cousin's godchild is unknown," he said, evenly. "But the mother of your housekeeper happens to have been my own *nounou*, my wet-nurse; which makes of Poldka my foster sister."

"That's why she didn't hesitate to help herself to half the furniture out of your house for us! Quite a family affair."

The Baron smiled agreement. "Though I hope," he said, courteously, "that no neighbor who had need of anything of mine would hesitate to ask for what was required. Poldka did well; she also knew, as you must know yourself, *chère madame*, that what she took from me would never be missed."

Astaire did know, having become familiar by this time

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with the Baron's rather curious establishment. His property, adjoining the Orašac estate back to back so that it faced another inlet, contained, as he had once told them, many houses and not any home. He himself kept modest bachelor quarters in a small *garçonnière*, where he slept and on occasion ate; there were similar quarters for his servants; half a dozen cottages scattered about the place for tenants and farm laborers, together with the usual assortment of coach-houses, tool-sheds, stables, and the like. But of the great central mansion, like that at Orašac, about which no doubt these had once clustered, nothing remained except a single creeper-covered tower, to which was attached a very damp and ancient chapel, full of tombs.

"One is grateful," he shrugged, "that the earthquakes which once wrecked this neighborhood at least spared a familiar place in which to lay one's bones. My grandfather had the intention suitably to rebuild our château when he married, as had my father. I, too, in youth, busied myself with plans for its restoration. But—the years pass; in the end one manages very well with things as they are."

Not too well, thought Alan and Astaire, exchanging glances of pity. They found those cramped, untidy bachelor quarters depressing, crowded beyond comfort with ancient and massive furnishings; as were, indeed, most of the available buildings on the place. It became their favorite adventure to go about peering in at cobwebbed windows and lifting dusty sheets to see what

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next they might unearth. Once it was an ancient harp, with a voice eery as a banshee's; again, in a stable loft, they found treasure-trove in the shape of tall Chinese chairs lacquered in dim gold, ornately carved sofas and fauteuils, upholstered in brocade of a jade-blue color that seemed familiar.

"How in the world," asked Alan once, "did one solitary bachelor ever manage to accumulate all this stuff?"

The Baron shrugged. "Chiefly by inheritance, my friend; it is the penalty of being the last of a large and very sentimental family. Eh, that tyranny of inanimate things! Does it not seem strange," he said, looking about him with a touch of somberness unusual to his cheerful urbanity, "that these objects which have no life of their own should so long outlast the life that called them into being? . . . With us of this country," he explained, "there is peculiar reverence for personal possessions. Such never come under the hammer of the auctioneer. To dispose of one's household furniture is, even among our humbler peasants, considered to be poverty's final degradation."

"No wonder," sighed Astaire the decorator, with professional regret, "that you never find any of this wonderful old Dalmatian stuff on the market anywhere! Dubrovnik is the only city of my acquaintance that doesn't seem to contain a single antique shop. I suppose," she mused, being a young person of rather one-track mind, "that the Gospodja's house is full of

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treasure like this, too? She looks like the sort who would need beautiful things about her."

The Baron asked, with a touch of polite interest, whether his cousin was herself still beautiful. "She was considered the reigning beauty of her generation hereabouts. But it is too much to hope that time has not brought changes."

"Do you mean," exclaimed Astaire, "that you, living on the adjoining property, never even see your cousin?"

"One is rather careful not to do so," said the other, quietly, "since it is her wish. My cousin took greatly to heart her father's banishment."

"Banishment?" exclaimed his listeners.

The late Knez, it appeared, who owed allegiance to the earlier Obrenović dynasty, adherents of Austria, had declined rather persistently and indiscreetly to reconcile himself to the present victorious Karageorgj dynasty, and was therefore, by order of King Peter Karageorgj, confined upon his own estates and pronounced *incommunicado*—an enemy to the Crown, not entitled, therefore, to associate with those who were the king's friends.

"Oh, but surely his daughter didn't have to be *incommunicado*, too!" protested Astaire.

"Only by her own preference. Even the banishment of the father was largely voluntary. Twice, as I happen to know, King Peter, who was never one to harbor grudges, sent word unofficially to my kinsman that when he came to Court to offer his proper allegiance, he would be well received. The first hint Stanić refused,

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on the excuse of failing health; the second arrived at his death-bed. And the only occasion on which his daughter has left her own deliberate seclusion since was at the time of our present king's visit here, on his bridal tour of the country, when Stanić Ivana absented herself at the nearest spa, presumably for her rheumatism, rather than be put to the necessity of paying homage publicly to King Peter's son. . . . Patriotism, mistaken or not, is the ruling passion of our race, do you see, beside which all others pale—with the exception, possibly, of pride."

Something in his tone produced a momentary silence. Then Astaire remarked: "But I shouldn't have thought she needed to go on being *incommunicado* indefinitely, even to you, her own cousin!"

"To me most of all," said their friend, gravely; and changed the subject.

"Did you get that, Alan?" demanded the girl, as soon as they were alone. "To him, most of all! There's more in this than meets the eye, young fellow-my-lad; and it isn't mere politics, nor yet patriotism. Women don't shut themselves up, and turn into recluses and misers, simply as a spite-gesture against the government that happens to be in power. Not women like that!"

"At least," commented the young architect, "she's chosen a becoming background for her spite-gesture."

They were drifting home along the Ombla with engine throttled down in order that he might enter in his indefatigable sketch-book certain details of the house

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Orašac: columned windows with pierced trefoil arches, elaborately carved spandrels between, the balustraded terrace rising out of the water which is so marked a feature of early Dalmatian architecture. "Think," he mused, "of reproducing that proud beauty somewhere on Long Island, say, or up along the Hudson ——"

"—for a fat retired bootlegger, with heirlooms out of Grand Rapids. Utter sacrilege, of course! Which I shall most certainly help you to commit when, as, and if I ever manage to get a glimpse of its interior," she finished, grimly.

In the end the thing came about through no contriving of her own. For weeks the Adriatic had been as a sympathetic ally to the loves of Alan and Astaire, offering days when sea and sky were one, nights that wore the moon like a halo. It is the haunt of all the winds there are, that narrow ocean, acquainted with treacherous Sirocco, and fierce Bora, and gentle Jugo, and even all three at once. Waterspouts are not unknown to it, with other violent phenomena. But so far only the Jugo came in punctually each noon, sweet-scented from more southerly shores, to tease their quiet water into a flurry of bright spindrift and set the old ships dancing as if young again. Of that dreaded wind out of the north, against which double walls of masonry are built across high pastures, and rope stretched in Triest squares for the safety of pedestrians, the Americans knew nothing. Farther and farther a-sea they ventured daily, in the courage of happy ignorance, with Janko and the make-

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shift motor-boat which was his pride; so discovering many a hidden inlet where some half-ruin dreamed, deep in its water garden, waiting to be transferred to Alan's sketch-book; many a sequestered beach where the two, casting aside the cares of their profession, to say nothing of the habiliments, played at being nymph and merman among the sheltering rocks.

It was while they were returning, damp-haired and glorious, from such adventure that the crystalline placidity beneath them gave its first preliminary shudder, as of one stirring out of heavy sleep. Janko left his wheel to reach for a pair of oars, which he offered silently to Alan.

"What's up?" asked the latter. "The put-put seems to be doing its full duty."

The boy jerked a laconic thumb over his shoulder toward the north. Their eyes, less accustomed, saw nothing except that the brilliance of the air about them seemed to have dulled a little, to have become slightly opaque.

"Bora," said the boy, briefly. "Pull, *gospod!*"

Alan grinned at his wife reassuringly. "We seem to be in at last for a bit of weather. Hope you like weather?"

"Not at all," she admitted, without shame. "Give me an oar. Luckily we haven't very far to go."

Nor had they. Nevertheless both, long before they reached the mouth of their own inlet, had abandoned the auxiliary oars and were bailing with anything they

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could lay hands on—cans, hats, shoes. There was no question of trying to make their own landing; they went as the sea willed, mounting each toppling crest less and less bouyantly, while water rose higher about their feet, their ankles, their knees. The engine stopped.

“No matter; we’re getting there quite fast enough as it is!” grinned Alan.

Her answering smile did not fail him. At least, she thought, we’re together; a happy ending. Who was it that said no love could ever have a happy ending? ‘One must go first, ah God! One must go first!’ But we are luckier. . . . Her eyes, alert to register impressions to the last, saw that the dropping sun, undimmed, had turned sky and wild water alike into living flame, so that the waves so rapidly engulfing them were waves of light. Against the radiance directly before them loomed a tall house, among cypresses. Far out on its terrace stood a tall woman’s figure with skirts whipping about the knees; along the pier below ran a second sturdier figure, bent double against the wind. The boy Janko, still working indomitably over his engine, achieved a final watery sputter, and stood up. “*Sbogom!*” he muttered with regret, presumably to his engine; which is the Serbian for “Go with God.”

“Steady—” warned Alan at the same moment, as the boat lurched, gurgled, and went under.

Astaire waked with the same voice at her ear. So this is Heaven, then, she thought, tentatively. But the language Alan seemed to be using was not appropriate



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for Heaven. "Attagirl! Hold everything. Never mind, it's only sea-water! Take your time."

She managed to gulp out a question: "Janko ——?"

"Going strong. You can't drown these young Serb diehards. We swamped not a hundred feet from shore, and the recluse and the orphan girl were ready for us with ropes. Pretty snappy work, too! Nobody could have swum that seething caldron. Now then, get a grip on yourself, old thing, and see where we are at!"

She saw first, woman-like, what they were wearing: Alan, the sort of elaborate quilted dressing-gown affected by gentlemen of the cinema in their leisure moments—evidently the late Knez had been fond of dress; herself in a long-sleeved garment of the finest and heaviest cambric, yellowed by age, with much ornamentation of lace and feather-stitching, and infinitesimal tucks.

"Trousseau stuff," she pronounced, with authority. "You can't tell me that any respectable spinster lady affects such elegance in private life."

"Ssh! They speak English. The recluse has gone to brew you something really stiff in the way of camomile tea, or hot barley-water, while the younger one is heating bricks for your feet. Meanwhile," he urged her, "get an eyeful of what's here!"

The chamber's lofty and beautiful proportions quite dwarfed by contrast their own rather imposing salon. A frieze of painted coats-of-arms surrounded the vaulted ceiling, and one end wall was entirely taken up by a

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curious decoration in the form of an enormous frescoed tree, each of whose leaves was a dated name. Silently Alan called attention to the lowest of these, which bore the date A.D. 700. The opposite wall contained an architectural feature not to be encountered west of the Adriatic—the *pilo*, a sort of fountain resembling a tall columned chimney-place of stone, with shelves let into an arch above what might have been a hearth, but was instead a sculptured water-basin, for drinking purposes and the ceremonial laving of hands. Above the *pilo*, high in the wall, was another unmistakable evidence of the East—a grille of carved and gilded wood like the *moucharabies* of a Turkish harem. Similar grilles wainscoted the room, concealing bookcases. The combination of sculptured stone and tessellated floors and dim gilt carvings gave, with the triple Venetian arches of the windows, an effect of indescribable and exotic richness.

Then Astaire saw what Alan had been waiting for her to see—the almost painful incongruity of the furnishings. Chairs and benches were of the cheapest type, a large packing-box was used as a table. Discolored patches showed where pictures had been removed from the walls. The stuffing of the sofa on which Astaire lay exposed itself shamelessly to view. An Empire chaise-longue stood on three legs, propped by books. Of the treasure she had expected to find here, hardly a hint remained. The entire place was scrupulously, meticulously clean, but shabby beyond anything in their experience.

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"It's gruesome!" said Astaire, under her breath. "Miserliness carried to the point of pathology!"

"Miserliness? If I know poverty when I see it—and God knows I ought to!—this is the genuine article; grim, grinding, perfectly hopeless poverty. Two women fighting off the wolf with all they've got."

"But this gorgeous house——"

"Mortgaged, probably, to its gorgeous eaves. The present market for ancient doges' palaces is no doubt limited."

"But her handsome dress—the grand little crested carriage—those perfectly priceless brocades at the windows, Alan!"

"Façade," he said, briefly. "Keeping up appearances. *Morituri te salutamus*. Take another look, by the way, at those curtains."

She saw then that the silk, brittle with age, was cracked in a dozen places, neatly darned in as many more. And then she recalled, quite suddenly, where she had lately seen the counterpart of this material—stored in the Baron's stable loft.

"Alan!" she gasped. "Do you realize that the poor old thing has probably been living for years on the sale of her household effects, piece by piece?"

"Which the cousin she doesn't speak to has been secretly buying in, of course—Ssh!" he adjured her, sibilantly. "They're coming!"

"What I fail to understand"—Astaire improvised at random an airy conversation—"is why another book-

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case should have been built so high up on the wall there, where no one could possibly reach it without a painter's ladder?"

"But that is no place for books," said a gentle voice behind her, speaking an English as correct and musical as its German, although less accustomed. "It screens the little gallery where it is our custom for ladies and young persons to retire on occasions of ceremony, when they are not, naturally, expected in the salon. One listens there quite comfortably. . . . You find yourself so soon recovered from your unfortunate experience, then, madame? How that is well!"

"It was really," confessed Astaire, with her usual engaging candor, "a fortunate experience, since we've been wanting ever since we came to make closer acquaintance with this house. And with you."

"I also," admitted the lady, simply. "Young people come rarely to our vicinity in these days. One has watched the lights in your *zamak*, madame; one knows, from the two candles, when dinner is brought into the loggia; one knows, from the lamp, that you go into the salon to read, perhaps, or to make a little music. When a single candle mounts into an upper chamber, one knows that soon all will be dark again— Young, happy people," she repeated, "are rare with us in these days. Ah, truly, the Bora for once was no ill wind! Only, one regrets the little engine boat; it made about the water such cheerful noises. I think, however," she added, reassuringly, "that your servant-boy may soon

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have it afloat again; they are practical with boats, our folk. Now he goes on foot to tell his grandmother that you are safe here for the night. The good Poldka must have greatly concerned herself."

Alan protested, while Astaire surreptitiously kicked him for it, that they could not think of inconveniencing her by remaining for the night.

"But how is it possible that such guests could make inconvenience?" replied the recluse, with obvious sincerity. Moreover, she added, what was there to do but stay? Their clothing was still quite sodden; nor could strangers venture the cliff road with a Bora blowing. "Listen!" She lifted a hand. Above a steady ominous roar that was the sea, the wind shrieked madly, discharging spray like bullets against the window glass, striking the solid masonry of the house as with buffets of a giant fist. "Tomorrow, if need be, you shall return by carriage; but tonight how could I permit? Meanwhile, Annushka prepares for us some little refreshment."

It was a most frugal meal, offered without hint of apology: bowls of chilled clabbered cream, a little wine—"Laid down by my father in the year of our best vintage," she told them—dark peasant bread, and a conserve which was a *spécialité de place*, explained their hostess, made at a certain season of the year from rose leaves out of their garden.

"Rose leaves! Wouldn't you know it?" murmured Astaire, incoherently, as they fell asleep in a great

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chamber echoing the bruit of wind and sea, bare of all furnishing except bed, prie-dieu, and crucifix.

By the time they parted in the morning the American girl and the Ragusan lady had become fast friends, having reached that high point of women's intimacy when adventures in poverty are freely exchanged. To think, the Gospodja sighed with sympathy, that one so young, so obviously *wohlgeboren*, should find herself obliged to earn her bread outside the sanctuary of the home! "Myself, I have been more fortunate," she confided, "in that I happened to inherit a number of objects for which our man of business has found from time to time a market. There is surprising demand, it appears, for our old Dalmatian treasures. Also, the sale of certain lands one no longer requires has enabled us to keep the *zamak*. All such things my Annushka arranges for me. She is so clever, my Annushka."

"And there they are, holding on for dear life," said Astaire, as the two walked home through a morning world as innocently pristine as though no ruffian Bora had ever had his will of it, "to that empty 'sanctuary of the home'—while not half a mile away, the other poor old Salamancan darling hasn't even that to hold on to; only a lot of land, and houses, and servants, and other stuff he hasn't any use for! Wouldn't you think," she demanded, impatiently, "that Nature might have managed things just a little better?"

"I'm not putting it beyond you," commented her husband, "to be jacking Nature up about it."

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"And why else do you suppose we were sent here, anyhow?" she replied, with calm; for this Astaire, who would have made her frank young-modern denial of any accepted orthodox beliefs whatever, did nevertheless order her life by a quaint little semi-religion all her own, one of whose tenets was that we are quite unavoidably our brother's keeper, whether we care to be or not.

She found, however, that Nature had been less remiss than appeared in the matter of Gospodja Ivana and their friend, the Baron, who had, so Poldka informed them under sufficient pressure, been affianced to each other since early youth.

"Affianced! There! Didn't I tell you," cried Astaire to her husband, "that it was a trousseau nightgown? Do go on, Poldka!"

The betrothal, a most suitable one considering the family relationship and the adjoining properties, had been celebrated while both were young. "And what an *ispit!*" said Poldka, raptly, warming to the reminiscence. "For a full week, dancing with free wine on all the beaches, water fêtes, music; distinguished guests arriving constantly by yacht, in traveling-carriages. *Che meraviglia!*" All the guests, Poldka informed them, complacently, were of the very highest distinction—statesmen, generals of the army, princes—or at least, she amended, with her meticulous Serb honesty, one prince, not very important then, but who had since become no less a person than their present King, Alex-

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ander. She found the effect of this casual announcement most gratifying.

"Your king! But I thought," said Alan, "that the present ruler was of the Karageorgj dynasty, which Count Stanić so bitterly opposed?"

"*E vero*," admitted Poldka; "but naturally at such a time hospitality could be refused to none, even a prince who was an enemy."

The Karageorgj who later won Serbia her liberty, their King Peter, was in those days merely an exiled pretender to the throne, it appeared, whose son was learning how to be a Serbian soldier under such apt teachers as the great General Putnik himself—close friend and former companion-at-arms of Count Stanić. It was General Putnik, indeed, who had brought the young Alexander with him to Dalmatia.

"No doubt hoping to make a friend of Count Stanić for the new Nationalist party, which had many adherents here. But our Knez was of a most stubborn nature—*testa dura*," explained Poldka, thumping her own head graphically to show the durability of the Count's. The more others said against the Obrenović king, the more fiercely loyal became the Knez to his *padrone*, said Poldka, so that when his daughter was invited to become lady-in-waiting to Queen Draga, the honor was at once accepted, despite the natural disapproval of her betrothed.

"Why 'natural'?" demanded Astaire, round-eyed.

"Because it meant the postponement of the marriage



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until her time of service at Court was ended. Also, our *barun*," explained their handmaiden, smoothing down a virtuous apron, "having been much in the world, knew well that such a Court was no fit place for a motherless young country lady not long from her convent school. However, it would have taken more than the evil example of Queen Draga—who was not, you comprehend, born a queen—to have corrupted the innocence of our Gospodja."

"She went to Court, then?" prompted Astaire.

"Eh, but yes, since her father required it. The Knez, do you see, was a most proud gentleman, fond of the company of greatness; not like our *barun*, who even in youth preferred to take his simple pleasure among his neighbors."

The daughter's feelings in the matter were apparently not consulted. The two gentlemen had quarreled violently, said Poldka, but in the end the Knez had carried his daughter away to Belgrade, leaving her *fiancé* alone to bite his knuckles in anger.

"So that," said Astaire, thoughtfully, "is how the engagement happened to be broken off?"

"Broken off? But how would it be possible to break a public engagement of betrothal? The marriage between the cousins was merely postponed, *gospa*."

"You can't mean," exclaimed the girl, incredulously, "that they are still regarded as an engaged couple? Why didn't they marry when she came back, then?"

Poldka had recourse to her frequent shrug. Much,

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she said, soberly, had occurred in the meanwhile. After the final downfall of the Obrenović party, Count Stanić, no longer proud and powerful, became practically a prisoner on his own estates. The doors of the house Orašac, once so lavishly hospitable, were thereafter closed to all.

"Rather a good time, I'd think," remarked Alan, "for Sverlja to forgive and forget, and to rally round."

But it was the Gospodja, explained Poldka, who could not forgive and forget.

"Forget what?" demanded the Americans in unison.

The caretaker's face went through an odd process her charges were familiar with, of closing visibly, like a shut book. "*Chi lo sa?*" she replied, indifferently; perhaps the murder of that unfortunate king and queen who, worthy or not, had been her friends.

"The murder ——!"

Sheer dismay silenced the listeners. Out of memory emerged certain tragic details of that change in Serbian dynasties which foreshadowed such deep changes in the entire fabric of European history—a puppet monarch found wanting, with his hated consort, surprised in sleep by an avenging group of his own officers; the futile effort at defense on the part of a few faithful; the mob-hysteria when the two bodies were thrown from palace windows to be torn in pieces, as by a pack of wolves. This ancient Eastern civilization, for all its vaunted culture, had moments, it appeared, quite starkly and Easternly primitive.

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But their courteous old neighbor, with his amiable gallantry toward all women, and his eager zest for life . . . "Surely," frowned Alan, "it is not possible that Baron Sverljja could have taken part in any such atrocity!"

The woman's face stiffened. "While it is believed that our *barun* did not happen to be in Belgrade at the time the act of justice was committed, *gospod*, it is also known that he belonged to the group of patriot officers which carried out the execution," she said, coldly.

Reason enough, agreed her startled hearers, for Queen Draga's former lady-in-waiting to decline any further association with her cousin!

Yet it was not for this alone that the Gospodja would have declined to receive her *fiancé*—she being herself a soldier's daughter, who understood well enough that any soldier must obey his orders. It was because—Eh, well, said Poldka, unbending to their obvious interest, it was no doubt difficult for one of the Gospodja's gentle upbringing to understand the male demands. . . . And the cousins had been for so long lovers, too! "*Ma si*, since childhood even. Always together, hand-holding, embracing—a pair of innocent turtle doves. *Che bella!* That is why the parents affianced them so young, to avoid appearance of scandal. As I have said, our *barun* is of most ardent nature."

"Why, the poor old darlings!" exclaimed Astaire, maternally. "She eating her heart out alone all these years, and he still waiting for her—figuratively speak-

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ing," she added, having observed a slight noncommittal flicker in their handmaiden's eye.

The latter reminded them staidly that the Gospodja at least was not quite alone, having her orphan for companionship; and went away.

"‘I have been faithful to thee, Cynara, after my fashion,’" quoted Alan, grinning. "Looks as if our friend's ardent nature had rather got away from him while waiting. Now what, Mrs. Fixall?"

"Merely," replied his wife, with firmness, after a long, reflective pause, "that if Cynara's generation doesn't happen to understand the nature of the weaker sex as we do nowadays, there are those who could, and should, enlighten her."

The enlightenment took place during the course of a lesson in rose-preserving, Astaire's chosen theme for the conversation being the relative capacities for loneliness, male and female. "I'm often surprised," she observed, with a tactful, offhand carelessness calculated to put the least wary of listeners upon guard, "how much better women left alone in the world seem to adjust their lives than men do. Given her teapot and her canary bird, the loneliest of spinsters will manage to make a home out of nothing at all; whereas a man in the same circumstances—Baron Sverlja, for example—" She paused imperceptibly to note the effect of the name, if any. "Whereas a man like Baron Sverlja," she continued, disappointed, "soon gets to have rather an unbrushed, spotty effect; if you know what I mean?"

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Gospodja Ivana remarked impersonally that the Baron's servants should be reprimanded for neglecting their duties.

"Who's to reprimand them? The poor Baron does so love to be on amiable terms with everybody! And his servants are all so old—older even than he is."

That drew fire. The lady lifted surprised eyebrows. "But Sverlja Gavriilo is not old, my dear! Only a few years older than myself. Though I dare say his manner of life may have told upon him. Nor does one think of my cousin," she remarked, rather drily, "as a lonely person. He still dances, I think?"

Evidently the recluse life was not quite secluded from neighborhood gossip. The Baron did dance, undoubtedly. In fact, only the night before, Astaire had been at pains to improve their friend's acquaintance with the rhumba, as practiced in New York roof gardens, in return for a lesson on his part in the ancient art of the *kolo* as practiced on Dalmatian threshing-floors.

"And one hears rumors," went on the lady tranquilly, though a delicate color began to mount her cheek, "of other amusements, even less creditable. Our peasant women hereabouts are very comely. They call my cousin, I understand, 'the peasant-baron.'"

"Oh, he's no hermit," admitted Astaire, stoutly, encouraged by that faint flying signal of distress. "Why should he be? A man who's spent the best years of his life wanting—well, something he can not get"—here

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she cast discretion to the winds—"is apt to compensate, as they say in psychology, by taking on anything else that's handy."

"You seem, my dear," said the other, in a tone of mild detachment, "to know a great deal about the gentlemen, for one so young!"

"I know *all* about them," was the modest reply. "When you've got a man of your own, you've got the lot; it's a simpler sex than ours. And let me tell you," she hurried on while her courage lasted, "that with Alan caring for me the way he does, I wouldn't dare—I simply wouldn't *dare*!—to turn him loose very long on a waiting world, even now. Too dangerous; all wound up and nowhere to go, if you know what I mean? Only, of course, there are entirely too many wheres to go, for the likes of him—or Baron Sverlja." She paused, aghast at her temerity.

The lady, however, unaccustomed though she might be to the candors of young twentieth-century philosophy, had not spent much of her own youth at one of the most dissolute of the lesser European courts without gaining a certain share of mundane comprehension. She said, with her gentle dignity, "Men are, no doubt, as men must be, my dear, and it is not our woman's province to judge them for it. But if they are also gentlemen"—a thin little edge of scorn came into the tranquil tones—"one has perhaps a right to expect of them a certain fastidiousness, no? A certain loyalty to caste, a certain proper family consideration. The 'peasant-baron'—

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*tchk!* Next we shall hear that he becomes a socialist!" She made with her delicate and fragile hands a stern little gesture of repudiation.

Astaire was abashed. Prepared for hidden heartbreak, for tragic maidenly noncomprehension of some hot-headed masculine folly which had wrecked two lives, she did not know how to cope with a point of view to which it appeared to be, rather, an error of taste, a breach of caste decorum, slight but irremediable.

"I suppose you get that way," she reported ruefully to her husband, "by having too many coats-of-arms to live up to; all the natural emotions you ought to have turn into well-bred inhibitions."

"You get that way," corrected Alan, who was older, "by having life slip out from under you like a swamped boat, so that there's nothing left but to go on treading water till you sink. Especially if you're not the sort that can call for help."

They were always proud afterwards that what was probably the Gospodja's first call for help came to themselves. Some days later, from the vantage-point of the open loggia, whence they were wont to keep in touch with events of their maritime neighborhood, they observed a dory rapidly approaching, poled in the upright Dalmatian fashion by a sturdy young woman, whom they recognized as Annushka.

"She's in a hurry, too! Something must have happened to the Gospodja!" exclaimed Alan.

Something had indeed happened to her Gospodja,

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admitted Annushka, quite breathless with dismay—no, not an illness; worse! His Majesty the King of the United Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, returning from a visit to his native Montenegro by way of the Dalmatian coast, had graciously signified his intention to call without ceremony at the house Orašac, two days hence. The Gospodja, at her wit's end, had sent for advice to her enterprising new American friends, who, having themselves been guests lately at Orašac, would no doubt understand—? Her singularly expressive eyes implored them to understand, without further disloyal revelation.

They realized the dilemma. Accustomed though it might be to entertainment of the great, that abode of former grandeur was hardly in condition now to receive even the simplest of royalties, the soldier-monarch of whom it has been said that the humblest of his people needed but to rap on the palace door to be admitted. While the Karageorgj is a house less ancient, and far less haughty, than that of many of its subjects, still a ruling king is a king.

Astaire rose to the emergency with alacrity. "Go back and tell the Gospodja to leave everything to us. In one full day, given the proper wherewithal, I would guarantee to turn Saint Paul's Cathedral, tombs and all, into something really homelike!"

"Which is all very well," demurred her husband, "but just how, may one ask, do you expect to come by the proper wherewithal, Mrs. Fixall?"



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She looked at him with the pity the slower-witted sex frequently inspires in wifely bosoms. "There's going," she told him, "to be another moving-day on the face of the waters—and what a moving-day! Fortunately," she added, thoughtfully, "Baron Sverlja is coming over to dinner."

Their neighbor received the tidings with a lack of surprise which Astaire found somewhat disappointing. His Majesty, he commented, made rather a pleasant point of going about among his people unexpectedly, as had his father and grandfather before him, in order to see that all was well in his domain.

"'So kings ruled when the world was young—'" Alan quoted his Browning.

Also, continued Baron Sverlja, King Alexander wished, no doubt, to discharge in this friendly manner a certain belated obligation to the house Orašac, for assistance rendered the Serbian army during the recent war.

"Services," exclaimed Alan, "to the *Serbian* army? But I thought they were of the other party! That Count Stanić was a staunch upholder of the Austrian regime?"

"Which did not prevent my kinsman," said the Baron, "from coming to the aid of his own people, his own neighbors, in their hour of need."

He gave them a little glimpse, then, the more graphic for its brevity, of that darkest hour in his nation's history, the famous retreat of Serbia's decimated forces

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across their own lands under the great strategist, General Putnik, with one chance only of escaping utter annihilation by slipping into the Albanian hills, and so through to the sea, before the rapidly converging armies of Germany and Turkey should meet and bottle them up irrevocably in the Sanjak of Novi Bazar. On this forced march the little army, already near exhaustion, had to depend for sustenance on a terrain completely despoiled, fought over, lost, and won, and lost again. Before the troops, on foot, though no longer young, marched the General. With them marched the stout old *heidouc*, King Peter, by automobile when he could not walk, on horseback where cars could not go, and in a litter when he was no longer able to ride. His presence, explained Baron Sverlja, was like a banner. Everywhere as the army passed it was augmented by peasant families, old men, women, children, fleeing before the enemy. And for all of these no food was to be found anywhere.

"Once," the Baron told them, "when our division halted for the night——"

"You were there yourself?" interrupted Astaire.

"But naturally, being Serb," replied the Ragusan, simply. "On that evening there were no rations for our camp, except a soup made of horses' hide, for which appetite lacked—if hungry long enough, one does not always care to eat; when word came in that a bullock train was to be seen approaching slowly across country, from the direction of Dalmatia; a train of fifty fat

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young oxen, each laden to capacity with cheeses and loaves of bread and wine. It was a gift to Voivoda Putnik from his friend and former fellow-officer, Stanić of Orašac."

"Swell!" pronounced the two Americans, in unison.

"Once again," continued the other, "such timely windfall came to us. It was after we had at last reached Corfu, where our *ban* was interned for the remainder of the war. We were not many by that time, but still too many for the resources of an island that barely grows a sufficiency to feed itself. When cholera broke out, they put us on a smaller, separate island, so that they need not watch our sufferings—the Corfiotes are a most sympathetic people. You may have seen the place, in passing, there at the harbor's mouth? It is quite covered now with rows of graves. Once at dawn we woke to find a small Dalmatian sailing-vessel—like these at anchor here in the steading—flying the house flag of the Stanić fleet; my kinsman owned in earlier years many such stout little merchant ships. It brought a full cargo of provisions and tobacco and hospital supplies, the first of several relief vessels which managed to slip in by night through the enemy blockade. They are good seamen, our Dubrovnik boys."

The girl said, after a brief appreciative silence; "But, my word! Bullock trains, and whole shiploads of provisions—it must have cost him a small fortune!"

"A large fortune," corrected Baron Sverlja, "or what was by that time left of it."

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They understood then the present poverty of the house Orašac.

"You mean," exclaimed the American, "that the exile actually ruined himself for a cause he did not uphold? What a gesture! A bit hard on his natural heirs and assigns, though, wasn't it?"

"There were none left, except his daughter, and the thing was done, as I happen to know," said the Baron, quietly, "with her full knowledge and approval."

"Coals of fire— No wonder people in the cafés stand up when she passes! I'm glad," said Alan, "that I stood up myself."

The following day happened to be the one on which the Gospodja customarily made her excursion into Dubrovnik for business purposes; nor did it occur to her to vary the routine of existence merely because of the impending honor of a visit from royalty. "Fortunately," she commented, "His Majesty has indicated his intention to come without ceremony." She seemed quite content to leave matters in the hands of her dynamic young neighbors from across the water.

For several hours the pair worked diligently, with the interested collaboration of Annushka, Poldka, Janko, and his motor-boat—the latter rescued miraculously from the deep only a little hoarser of voice for the experience. They concentrated entirely on the salon, selecting only enough loot from the Baron's storehouses to give a look of comfort to the lofty nobility of the room's proportions.

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Annushka accepted without comment the reappearance of the chosen treasures—soft-toned tapestries, tall alabaster floor vases, the jade-blue brocade chairs, with one high carven one, in tactful suggestion of a throne. But their effect upon the Gospodja was galvanic. It was late afternoon when an exclamation from the threshold apprised them of her return. They saw her pass a dazed hand over her eyes, as if to clear their vision. “Do I dream?” she muttered, half aloud. “My grandmother’s harp—the Archbishop chair that stood in our chapel—the screen like a peacock’s tail that father brought once from India! No, no, impossible! These things were all sold and scattered, years since. What should they be doing here now? From where can they have come?”

Astaire told her. The Gospodja paled. “He! My cousin Gavrilo? But why? How has he dared——?”

“Perhaps he wasn’t quite so lacking in—in family loyalty as you have thought,” suggested Astaire, intrepidly; and fled in utter panic.

It was an hour or more before she ventured back to the salon, to find the lady seated in one of the brocade chairs, whose arm she stroked unconsciously as one might stroke the hand of a recovered friend. There was a singular brightness in her eyes, whether of anger or of unshed tears Astaire did not know; but of the reappearance of the furniture she spoke no more, then or afterwards. She merely said, with some hesitation: “Do you know, my dear, I find myself not a little *disträite*

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at the thought of receiving again, quite alone—one is so long out of the habit of conversing with strangers! Would it not be well, do you think, if some other member of our connection—preferably some gentleman—were at hand, to offer His Majesty a cigar, perhaps, or a cognac, or whatever hospitality gentlemen require?”

Astaire said, with a strong effort for nonchalance, that she thought the idea most wise.

“My first intention,” continued the lady, still smoothing the silken arm of her fauteuil, “was to invite yourself and monsieur your husband to serve in that capacity—a little compliment one would have liked to pay to America, my country’s friend,” she added, graciously. “But, unfortunately, Court experience reminds me that strangers are not presented to royalty without permission in advance. Therefore”—she paused, while Astaire leaned forward uncontrollably—“therefore,” she continued, in a voice that changed a little, but did not falter, “I have taken the liberty of sending your boat-boy to the far side of the peninsula, with a note for my kinsman, Sverlja, asking him to be kind enough to assist in doing the honors of my father’s house tomorrow. I hope that you may approve?”

Astaire approved so deeply that she could not say so, but bent instead to kiss the other’s cool, pale cheek; and was kissed in turn on both of her warm young brown ones, very tenderly.

In the end both conspirators were present at the occasion, although not officially, Gospodja Ivana having

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bethought herself of the listening-screen above the *pilo*. "Many an evening my governesses and I have spent in the balcony there, when my parents were entertaining. Perhaps," she suggested, diffidently, "it might amuse you also to listen? Although royal persons are not often very amusing."

This one was impressive enough, at least, in his grave and manly dignity, decided the unseen watchers. "And will you look at our grand old unreconstructed rebel?" breathed Alan, with a quite proprietary pride. "That curtsy!—just the right distinction between impersonality and deference. And not a change in her town-going costume, *châtelaine* and all, except for a fresh *ruche* at the collar!"

Gospodja Ivana was indeed quite as composed of manner as her visitor, who had come ashore from his yacht attended only by one gentleman-in-waiting, both wearing the plain khaki fatigue uniform of Serbian officers. The King's dress was distinguished from that of his companion by a single decoration in the form of a diamond-pointed star, hanging at his collar. He seated himself—not, Astaire was pained to note, in the arch-episcopal throne prepared for him—but on a small sofa beside his hostess. Annushka served them with coffee, deftly and unobtrusively, with head uncovered, like a daughter of the house. The Gospodja, further to make it clear that she was no servant, introduced her to the royal guest with a quiet; "My godchild, Your Majesty."

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"She would!" breathed Alan, fervently. "That's my idea of a fine lady."

The brunt of the conversation was borne by Baron Sverlja, who replied with his accustomed simple ease to the royal lead, both speaking French—greatly to the gratification of the eavesdroppers above, who knew no Serbian. They heard the King praise the Gospodja's conserve of roses. "A delicious *slatko*—made, no doubt, madame, under your personal supervision?"

"With my own hands, sir, according to our Dalmatian custom."

"Ah? My wife also interests herself," the royal guest said, approvingly, "in household matters."

"But naturally, Her Majesty being a German princess," was the courteous comment. "In case she happens to lack our Dalmatian recipe for the eglantine conserve, it would give me great pleasure, sir, to be permitted to send some of our making to the royal kitchens at Belgrade."

The rather worn young face of the gentleman in khaki broke into a boyish, very charming smile. "Even better—perhaps you will permit us," he suggested, "to take some with us to our boat?"

It was not a long visit; nor until the King rose to terminate it was any underlying motive made manifest. Then his quiet affability changed to a manner slightly more ceremonious.

"It has come lately to our attention, madame," he said, "that certain honors intended by my father for



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your father, Count Istvan Stanić, were never accorded him, because of his failure to appear at Court for that purpose."

"My father's health, sir, did not permit him to leave the exile imposed upon him," she replied, in a low and steady voice. "But I am not aware of any special honors due him at Your Majesty's hands, or at those of His late Majesty, King Peter. Our family has never, as you know, taken oath of allegiance to the present government."

"Which makes Count Stanić's generosity in Serbia's hour of need the more remarkable."

The lady flushed. "In the command of my father's friend, General Putnik," she explained, less steadily, "were many Dalmatian men, sir; Dubrovnik men, our neighbors."

"I have cause to remember them," said the royal visitor. "Any benefactor to Serbia was my father's creditor, madame, as he is mine, no matter what his political sympathies. You will please consider, therefore, that it is not I, your King, but Yugoslavia, your country, who thus honors through the daughter a brave and distinguished patriot who is no longer able to receive the recognition in person." He took a box from his companion, opened it, lifted out a small medal similar to the star he wore at his collar, and bent forward to fasten it upon the lady's shoulder.

What was said after that the listeners did not know, for he spoke the Serbian tongue, and she answered in

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the same language—which, it appeared, was not beneath her dignity, on occasion—curtsying so low that she tottered a little, and had to be steadied by the King's quick hand.

It was a moment ripe for catastrophe. Astaire, nose pressed flat against the grille in order to miss no single detail, gave vent suddenly, what with emotion and dust, to a series of shrill, infantile, uncontrollable sneezes. The group below started, looking up, and the tension of the little scene broke into relieved laughter.

"Ah! Young people," murmured the King, indulgently. "One had hoped to find children here; perhaps even grandchildren! It is not," he reminded them, "my first visit to this house. Our mutual friend, Voivoda Putnik, brought me on the occasion of a betrothal celebration—your own, if I remember?"—his pleasant glance included Baron Šverlja, who started. "All the countryside was *en fête*. The dancing, the music, the water-pageantry, such splendor as would have done credit to the days of the Doges—I have not forgotten it! A magnificence of hospitality possible only to this old traditional wealth of Ragusa. It is good to know, in these sterner days, that despite chance and change, such long established households as this of yours"—again his glance included the disconcerted Baron—"maintain still our inherited Slav traditions of patriarchal domestic custom, of married faith, of fruitfulness. Such progeny as you are fortunate enough to have," he went on, innocently—for even the most paternal of

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sovereigns cannot be expected to recall at will the full details of his subjects' private lives—"constitute the true *srbska* patriotism, my friends, the true augury of our country's lasting future."

Baron Sverlja, nonplused, stood mute for once, while Gospodja Ivana put out an instinctive hand of protest; but training was too strong—one does not, in Court circles, correct awkward little misapprehensions on the part of royalty. She gave her cousin a stricken look; to which he responded by taking her hand quickly and gallantly upon his arm. "We are indeed most sensible, sir," he said, finding his voice, "of Your Majesty's ever-sympathetic interest."

Here Alan and Astaire crept away from their listening post as stealthily as might be, by back stairs. Not until they were halfway home across the water did Alan feel free to give expression to his pent emotions; which Astaire observed with a slightly condescending air.

"Laugh on, hyena, since such is your nature," she remarked. "As for myself, I know exactly how the gods used to feel on high Olympus, scattering thunderbolts about all over the place."

"In the form of sneezes?" inquired Alan, and was off again.

Still she maintained her detached and kindly manner. "We move," she pointed out, "in a mysterious way our wonders to perform—but we perform them. They'll *have* to go through with it now, do you see, if only to save the poor King's face! And then Annushka can

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marry her impassioned school-teacher—the Baron supplying a nice little stepfatherly dower, of course—and so on,” she said, dreamy with cosmic prophecy, “and so forth, ad infinitum. It would have been a crime to let that grand old Salamancan strain die out.”

“But,” objected Alan, “aren’t you getting just a bit mixed in your dates, my goddess? After all, the pair must be fiftyish.”

“More likely sixtyish. But Annushka, you see, isn’t.”

They happened to be passing at the moment that place where the river Rijeka emerges from beneath miles of concealing shale in the form of a perpetual spring, whose liquid susurrations came musically to their ears.

“Umm,” said Alan, “I begin to see! My felicitations, Mrs. Fixall.”

He bowed. Astaire bowed. Then they turned in unison and saluted the house Orašac.

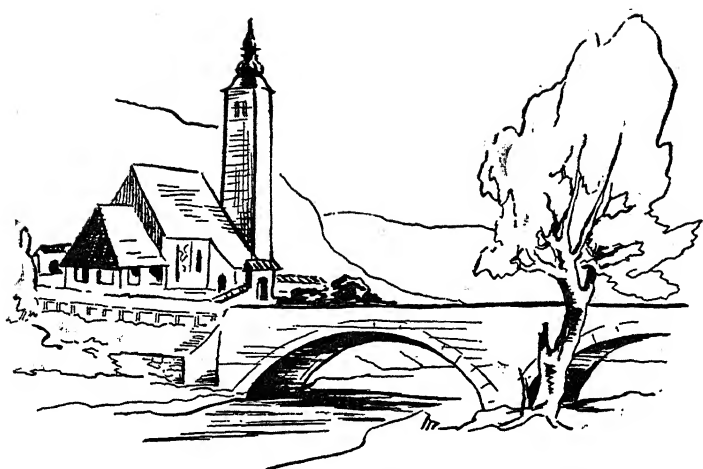
“*Sbogom!*” they said to it, encouragingly.

*22*

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### III

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IT WAS not so much the loss of the pug, Rollo, unique relic of his species, and of an age certainly to be gathered unto his fathers without repining—life, indeed, could have had very little to offer Rollo of late years, confined as he was to his sanitary bassinet in the library, with occasional stately constitutionals about the area-way. Nor was it the enforced sale of her family homestead, a severe mansion located in what had been one of Boston's most correct and quiet residential squares, now become a most incorrect and unquiet center of Boston's immigrant invasion, so that whenever she cared to look out of her discreetly curtained windows Miss Endicott's eye was offended by sportive young of all na-

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tions, whose noses invariably needed wiping; or perhaps Mrs. Vanna Opodopolous on the steps of the mansion opposite, frankly nourishing the newest of her Græco-Roman progeny; or at best the neighborhood policeman, Connor, lingering by with idle-swinging club in order that he might exchange amorous persiflage through Miss Endicott's basement windows with the prettier of her Swedish housemaids. These candid processes of nature!—one would be rather glad to escape such immediate contact with them, reflected Sophia. Moreover, municipal condemnation of private property for the public good—the Endicott square being about to be converted into model tenements—was a form of progress which no public-spirited person could permit herself to regret; particularly when the municipal price offered was not inadequate.

Nevertheless, deprived at once of the familiar shelter of her youth and of the sole heart's companion of her middle years, Miss Endicott found herself somewhat at loose ends. An unwonted restlessness pervaded her; she suspected that she was in danger of becoming what she called to herself "neurotic."

Heretofore, she had led far too active an existence to find time for unhealthy introspection. Her career of public usefulness coincided with the close of her first season in society, during which time she had made the rather dismayed discovery that the dancing-floor was not her *milieu*. Sophia enjoyed dancing; she found it a



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most wholesome and beneficial exercise. The difficulty seemed to be that whereas she was by birth, temperament, and ability a leader, the most insignificant of the young men presented to Professor Endicott's daughter appeared to wish to do their own leading. Hence, at the end of that one rather disastrous débutante season Sophia had shown the perspicacity to abandon the ranks of the ballroom wall-flowers for the club platform; where the Endicott habit of leadership came immediately into its own.

Efficiency, overdone as the word has come to be, was in her blood. She was one of the first of her generation, for example, to do away with the inconvenience of excess hair—not for her, naturally, the “windblown bob,” nor yet that exotic swirl of close-fitting undulations whereby well-shaped craniums have learned of late years to disclose their possibilities; but merely a sensible, workman-like, rather stubbly hair-cut, well shaven at the neck. She evolved also, in the interests of efficiency, a certain standardized costume which set a fashion among clubwomen of her day: The coat-dress, a garment less uncompromising than the tailored suit, and adaptable to more occasions. This she had made up, by the best modistes available, in the best possible materials, thin silk for summer wear, fine woolen for winter, lace for evening; the latter cut out sufficiently at the throat to show the Endicott pearls—quite good pearls, which she intended to will to her namesake niece; would in-

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deed have presented on her wedding-day, had the girl married a gentleman. But the wife of a socialist Slav immigrant has not, presumably, much need of pearls. . . . The coat-dresses, varying slightly with varying fashion as to skirt and sleeve, were always of appropriate and practical colors: brown, black, battleship gray. Miss Endicott permitted herself, however, some leeway in the matter of shoes, having a rather neat and shapely foot; her evening slippers affected heels of the type known as Baby Louis.

From the first she had gone in heavily for Causes. It was, fortunately, an era of Causes. Suffrage once securely won, largely through Sophia's efforts, her admirers felt, there arose the World to be Made Safe For Democracy. That attended to, Prohibition claimed her active support; and in due time—no Endicott fearing a rightabout face in the presence of hard facts—was replaced by Anti-Prohibition. But one day, early in August of the year 1933, Sophia Endicott woke to the fact that this cause, too, was practically won, and therefore lost to her. For the moment nothing—and what was more disconcerting, nobody—seemed to require the chivalrous aid of the uncouched Endicott lance. What next?

Sophia impatiently shrugged a well-tailored shoulder. "Don't," she adjured herself, "permit yourself to get morbid about it, my good woman!"—and adjusted her pince-nez to frown down upon the inevitable flock of dirty children dancing around a hurdy-gurdy below. Children at their best frankly bored her. She decided

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definitely not to accept her nephew Henry's dutiful invitation to visit for the remainder of the season at his Narragansett cottage, overflowing with callow youth; nor yet her widowed sister Caroline's suggestion that they spend the winter quietly together at Santa Barbara. "Paradise of the aged and infirm, California! Who *wants* to spend the winter quietly?" muttered Miss Endicott; and wished that Horace's girl, Sonya—named for herself a decent "Sophia," but preferring the more exotic form—were still living *en garçon* in her absurd New York penthouse, defying the family conventions, and writing rather outspoken fiction, and running about loose with all sorts of impossible people. To stay awhile with Sonya might have been rather entertaining. But the girl had defied family conventions once too often, had gone off the deep end with one of her impossible people, and had actually shown the bad taste to marry him. A foreigner, from some unpronounceable Balkan country one never heard of—socially speaking—Jugoslavia or Czechoslovakia or some such place. Not even a noble foreigner. What was worse, the girl had the effrontery to pretend to be living happily ever after.

Miss Endicott was not deceived. She had seen her share of these foreign alliances—though none, fortunately, in her own fastidious family circle; had watched them go forth with much fanfare of drum and trumpet, the triumphant young American countesses and duchesses and princesses; and presently return again less triumphantly, somewhat bedraggled of plumage

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and hard of eye. It would not be like that with her niece; the girl had pride to her—Miss Endicott, in the privacy of thought, was up-to-date enough to call it by another rather vulgar physiological term. Sonya would manage somehow to see it through.

And then, with sudden elated recognition, Sophia Endicott found her new Cause ready to her hand: Sonya must not be allowed to see it through! At whatever cost to her own convenience, Horace's motherless daughter must be rescued from the fruits of her folly and restored to her proper station in life before too late. Divorce happened to be one of women's new freedoms of which Miss Endicott quite truculently approved—with limitations. That sort of thing, she understood, could be managed in Paris most expeditiously; and fortunately there were as yet no complications—"complications" being Miss Endicott's maiden synonym for offspring.

There was, of course, another thought underlying this unwonted accession of family sentiment. Sonya's occasional letters, passed about the family circle with disapproval but no small interest, had more than once given Miss Endicott furiously to think. She wrote casually of Moslem neighbors of hers who were obliged to wear the veil, although even barbarous Turkey had now released its females from the indignities of the harem. The cause of women's freedom still needed, obviously, to be won in Jugoslavia—or was it Czechoslovakia? Plural marriages—veiled victims of man's

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unchecked brutality. At the realization of what possibilities lay before her, Miss Endicott's vigorous gray crest of hair tossed aloft again like the white plume of Navarre; an embattled gleam shone from her pince-nez; she may even be said to have, in a well-bred manner, snorted.

Some weeks later found her, therefore, on a luxurious Italian liner drawing into the unexpectedly civilized little harbor of Dubrovnik, where quite a large concourse of people were gathered on the dock.

"There seems," she murmured on the gangplank, perfunctorily pecking at her niece's proffered cheek, "to be some sort of demonstration going on here."

"In your honor, aunt; it's a demonstration of welcome. They will expect you, I think," suggested Sonya, always tactful, "to make them a little speech."

So Miss Endicott, although surprised, made from the gangplank her initial address in Jugoslavia—she was never at a loss for that sort of thing, and the demonstration of welcome, while understanding not one word of her crisply accented Bostonese, was nevertheless vastly flattered, and applauded to the echo, with pleased shouts of "*Zhivili!* Long live! Greeting to our friend's wife's relation!"

She was borne away in a modest car, with a very large insignia emblazoned on it, which was the property of the Mayor, loaned to give honor to the occasion, driven by Sonya's husband, a dark-browed, muscular

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young man, with a smile as shy and sudden as a child's, who spoke his English rather Serbianly.

"You are looking," murmured Sophia to her niece, with an accent of sympathy, "very well, my dear; surprisingly well." As a matter of fact, she had not realized before that Horace's girl had grown into a quite beautiful young person, with a quality to her beauty which was hard to analyze; an ethereal, almost luminous effect, as if some inner light irradiated the clear skin, and quiet eyes, and hair that outlined her face in a soft, bright nimbus. "The girl," said Miss Endicott to herself, "looks like some sort of slightly modernistic Madonna"—and suddenly realized why. Evidently one was not, after all, to escape immediate contact with the candid processes of nature.

"Niko," her niece was saying, "has been press-agenting you all over the place, he is so proud and pleased about your coming to us just at this time. Indeed, the whole community is much gratified. I'm pretty grateful myself, aunt dear! You see you are the only one of the family who has deigned to pay any attention whatever to our little event—which is, of course, rather a large event to Niko and me. Who told you about it—father?"

Miss Endicott murmured evasively: "I rarely see Horace, you know; he is so preoccupied always with his researches." She found herself momentarily at a loss to explain how grossly the purpose of her visit had

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been misunderstood. Horace really should have remembered to tell somebody something!

"The only thing that troubles Niko," went on Sonya, *sotto voce*, "is that you won't be staying under our own roof—he has been working like a Trojan to get it done, ever since we knew you were coming, and he cannot understand how you could prefer a *de luxe* hotel apartment to a makeshift bed in our fine new kitchen-parlor, with your turn at the family foot-tub. You see, we haven't been able as yet to afford ourselves a bathroom."

"You mean," asked her aunt in measured tones, "that you are building a house without a bathroom to it?"

"Of course we are! By hand and main strength. A perfectly wonderful little house. Niko's an expert mason, you see, as well as a very able architect. For bathing purposes, we use the same tub our Puritan forbears used—the ocean; only I fancy we use it somewhat more frequently. Wasn't it in New England that the family Saturday-night bath originated?"

Miss Endicott disdained reply to this unpatriotic thrust. "I am at a loss to understand," she commented, "why you feel that you must deny yourself the common comforts of life, merely because you have married so—shall we say, unconventionally? Surely your financial affairs cannot have reached such a state as that, despite the depression!"

"I haven't the least idea," said the girl, calmly, "what state my financial affairs have reached, and I

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don't care. That's for my publishers to worry about. The house we are building by slow degrees, you see, happens to be Niko's house."

Her husband spoke from the driver's seat, with an air of some reproof. "But whatever belongs to me, my Sonya, is also yours."

"Of course it is! And whatever belongs to me—well, let us hope it is accumulating comfortably there in New York for the benefit of future generations of us, since Niko will have none of it." She gave a little unconscious sigh. "Meanwhile two of our rooms are already done, built with money Niko's parents gave us for a wedding present, on a strip of old fruit-garden Baron Sverlja gave us, also for a wedding present, out of some tumble-down stone walls that were on the place ——"

"Baron who?" interrupted Miss Endicott, catching at the title as at a straw of hope. "Some relative of your husband's, perhaps?"

"Oh no—though at one time I rather fancied so. But I didn't know our Maika then. He's merely the family *padrone*; friend and general benefactor. You see, Niko's mother was at one time a maid in the Baron's household."

Miss Endicott murmured, aghast: "My dear! *Don't* tell me that you, descendant of generations of prominent and highly respected New England citizens, have actually married the son of a common servant girl?"

"But our Maika," smiled Sonya, "must have been a most uncommon servant girl. Wait till you see her,



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aunt dear! She'll probably try to kiss your hand, and you'll end by wanting to kiss hers—I often do; but she doesn't mind it so much now, because she knows how I adore her. . . . Look!" she interrupted herself, eagerly. "There's the first glimpse of our *domachia*!"

A long, low roof was visible, above walls of weathered stone built as massively as a fortress. They stepped down to it through a descending garden filled with gnarled old almond-trees, and fig-trees, and all the flowers that bloom along that coast of flowers. The two square rooms of it were separated by a passageway whose far door opened upon deep azure that was half sea, half sky. From its narrow terrace one could have dived straight down into the Adriatic, some hundred feet below. The inner walls, of stone smooth-surfaced, were neatly whitewashed; a tremendous chimney dominated each room; the window embrasures were deep enough to serve as seats. These, like the red-tiled floors, were covered by sheepskins, and a few clear-toned Sarajevo rugs. There was little other furnishing—two or three slab tables on iron stretchers, a few basket chairs for comfort, others of hand-hewn wood with rawhide seats and cushions. Into one corner of the sleeping-room a double-tiered bed was built, piled high with goose-down pillows.

"My plenishing," explained Sonya, "from Niko's mother, since I had no proper plenishing of my own. The substantiality of a bride's social position in the

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Kranik circle is gauged, you see, by the amount and quality of her bedding."

The fireplace of the other room was used obviously for cooking as well as warmth, with gaily painted dish-cupboards on either side.

"You can't imagine," murmured Sonya, "what a pleasant adventure fireplace cooking is!"

"I cannot, indeed," admitted her aunt, briefly. Sonya grinned.

"All we need now is the really modernistic bathroom that is going to be Niko's next job. With lavender fittings," she went on, dreamily, "and black-painted walls, and an orange shower curtain. It *would* be nice to have a hot shower again. . . . What do you think of our bungalow *srbska*, aunt dear?"

Miss Endicott remained silent; she was a very honest woman.

"We've done it literally by hand, Niko and I," went on her niece, with gusto. "Niko wouldn't let me handle his precious stones, I not being an expert mason; but I've developed gifts at joining and carving and house-painting that would astonish you. They astonished me! It's taking us some time to finish, of course, because we can work only evenings and Sundays, when Niko is free ——"

"Sundays!" protested Miss Endicott, to whose carefully cultivated breadth of mind the Sabbath was still the Sabbath.

"Oh dear, yes, with the priest helping, in between

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masses. Such a muscular, obliging priest! You'll like him, aunt. Almost everybody we know has taken a hand at our house—Niko's father and brothers, of course; and the Mayor, a two-time widower who is a great squire of dames, particularly American dames—mind your eye there, aunt!—and Mr. Rasić, Niko's employer; and all the younger poets of our Literary Circle——”

“Ah!” interrupted her aunt, clutching at another straw. “There is a Literary Circle, then?”

“And how!” murmured Sonya, in the vernacular. “They meet with us every week to swim, and sing, and drink *rakija*, and eat enormously—you know how poets are! It was the Literary Circle who contributed the slates for our roof—so appropriate, I thought. But it was I alone who made our little garden, even before the house began to be. Did you ever,” she asked, “make a garden of your own, aunt dear?—dig all the beds yourself, I mean, and tuck the seeds down into them, warm and safe, and then watch them one by one push off the earth-covering, and come thrusting out, and put forth small experimental leaves and buds, and suddenly be grown-up plants? It gives one rather a thrill, like playing at being God.”

Miss Endicott, who disliked unnecessary mention of Deity, said with some severity that she had never found time for any sort of play-acting, having occupied herself with more important affairs. “As you yourself should be doing. What is to become, may one ask, of your

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career, while you potter about at gardening, and amateur house-building, and all this sort of thing?"

"My career? O, Lord!" Sonya gave a little crow of laughter. "I give you my word, I'd forgotten all about it! Like you, I've been too busy with more important matters. With being happy for a while. Don't begrudge it to me, aunt dear!—will you?" A touch of wistfulness in her voice made Miss Endicott wonder for the first time whether the childhood of her brother's clever daughter might not have been a somewhat neglected one.

She postponed the idea of a Paris divorce; indeed, the rescue of Horace's girl from her folly seemed to offer unexpected difficulties, not the least of which was the personality of the husband in the case. Sophia, like many another lady of her kind and circumstances, was aware of a certain secret weakness for personable young men. This one had nothing of the uncouth, ill-mannered boorishness that radicals so often seemed to affect; on the contrary, there was a simple and virile dignity about the fellow, a sense of unwasted primitive force which might well have carried any over-intellectualized young modern off her feet—temporarily. Miss Endicott, an acute observer, fancied that the girl was already beginning to see certain angles of her marriage which had not presented themselves beforehand; there was a droop to the lips, when they were not smiling, that she found significant, and more than once she had caught Sonya's eyes following her husband about

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with a look which had more than tenderness, which held indeed something of troubled pity. The honeymoon was still obviously in the ascendant. But once it began to wane—what then?

The first time she found herself alone with Sonya, she put the question without hesitation, and was rather soberly answered.

"Aunt, I don't know 'what then'—perhaps there won't ever be a 'then.' Let us hope not. Anyway, I feel that the matter has been taken out of my hands now. Oh, I knew very well what I was doing. That's one trouble with people like you and me, we always know, painfully, just what we are doing—even why. I knew that in marrying Niko I was marrying his complete family, all his friends, his responsibilities, his history, his very politics. Serbs are like that. They never cut loose from the herd, as we do; they never even want to. And perhaps that is what I have needed most of all—the sense of the herd about me, its warmth, its protection. Flesh-and-blood human contacts. Writing is such a lonely substitute for living, aunt!"

Miss Endicott felt, but did not say so, that a good deal of loneliness might be preferable to too close human contact—especially with foreigners, who, in her experience, seemed almost invariably to have been eating garlic.

"I suppose," went on the girl, musing aloud, "you're wondering why I took the risk of marrying at all? Why, being the free lance that I am, and caring for

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Niko as I do—quite madly—I didn't just go to him as a lover, leaving an avenue of retreat open against the time when, as you suggest, the honeymoon may be over?"

The older Endicott blushed; but she had not devoted so great a part of her energies to the cause of woman's freedom without having freed her own mind from a good many of its virginal shackles. "Yes," she admitted, "I have wondered, Sonya. A number of people, I fancy, have wondered that. Not that the suggestion is a very nice one, I must say!"

"So many of nature's suggestions aren't very 'nice,' are they? But I've rather wondered, myself," confessed Sonya, dispassionately. "It was partly, I think, because I felt the need not only of 'seeing life and seeing it whole,' but of feeling it whole; not just skimming the cream off the top. Multiplicity of experience isn't depth of experience. Another excellent reason," she added, shrugging, "is that Niko simply wouldn't have me that way; there's too much of his mother in him."

"You can't mean," demanded her aunt, "that you actually hinted at any such relation?"

"Of course I did, when I saw he was afraid to marry me. More than hinted. Aunt, I *needed* Niko Kranik! I had to have him in any way I could. I wanted, like my garden things out there, to put roots into something deep; to thrust my way up, not too easily; to put out tentative leaves and buds; and finally, perhaps, really to blossom—if only once, if only for a short while; like

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that night-blooming cereus we watched opening in your conservatory one evening—do you remember?”

Miss Endicott did remember, vividly. She recalled the delicate pale bud, drooping modestly on its stalk; the sudden ecstatic lift of it; the visible swaying of the stem, although no air stirred; the rapid spread of the petals until, deep within, a feathery white star of bloom appeared that might have been the flower's soul, tethered to it by a mere filament of stamen; and still the petals widened, while from them issued a fragrance so exquisite, so compelling, that Miss Endicott resisted with difficulty an impulse to fling open the conservatory windows, lest some great moth of the night, some exigent winged lover who had come to his summons from afar off, be beating against the outer pane. In the morning the magic flower was closed and drooping again, already finished; and Sophia Endicott, with a vaguely distasteful feeling that such phenomena had no place in a well-bred spinster's conservatory, had exchanged the plant at the florist's for a rubber-tree. Now in her niece she saw again the miracle of that brief blossoming, and the sight moved her so strongly that, as was her way in moments of emotion, she changed the subject.

Almost at once began celebrations of her arrival, Niko Kranik's wife having collected about her already the usual odd and catholic acquaintance which formed part, Miss Endicott supposed, of a fiction-writer's stock in trade. The first entertainment was a

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family reunion at the house of Anté Kranik, Nikola's father, where she was introduced to numerous brothers, sisters, uncles, cousins, in fact the entire *zadruga* into which her niece had so unaccountably married. Old Anté, shopkeeper by vocation and bard by avocation, insisted upon waiting on his distinguished guest in person, keeping her glass filled with wine, further honoring her by transferring especially desirable tidbits from other plates to her own; while his wife Danitza sat, hands folded so that a certain palsied trembling of them should not be noticed, eyes black and velvet-soft in a face crinkled by myriad lines of lovingkindness, far too happy and excited to make any pretense of eating.

"I must confess," said Miss Endicott afterwards to her niece, "that I had rather dreaded—well, to be frank, the Kranik table manners. But really, after France or Germany——!"

"The Maika," reminded Sonya, "was maid in a rather particular sort of household, you see."

The meal had been served out-of-doors, as are most meals in Dalmatia when weather permits; an experience Miss Endicott found vastly preferable to the usual variety of family picnic. But a later visit to the interior of the house was less fortunate.

"Do you tell me," she murmured, gazing incredulously about Danitza's cherished "clean-room"—noting the bead-and-bamboo portières, the chromo enlargements of family likenesses, the tinsel saint's ikon, the inevitable bedstead in one corner—"do you mean to



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tell me that your husband really brought you to this place for your honeymoon?"

"Where else was he to bring me?" replied the girl, with a demure eye for her aunt's discomfiture. "Later, we set up housekeeping in one of the Baron's disused gardeners' cottages; but the first week of our marriage was spent right here, in this very room. Niko wouldn't have felt properly married otherwise—they are long on tradition, hereabouts. . . . I managed to get the windows open almost at once," she added, observing Miss Endicott's telltale nostril, "for the first time, I fancy, since the house was built. It was quite a triumph."

She went on, aware of her relative's reluctant curiosity, to describe her wedding in detail. "After the pope had completed the ceremony at the church ——"

"The Pope?" exclaimed Presbyterian Miss Endicott, shocked but impressed.

"The one who sat beside you at table today, with the curly black beard and the stovepipe hat with its brim around the top."

It was he who had led the wedding-party up the cliff stairs to the bridegroom's house, it appeared, the musicians marching before, playing as long as their breath held out; and at the door of the house the bride had knelt, as per instruction, to kiss her mother-in-law's threshold in token of obedience. "Don't be alarmed, aunt, it had been scrubbed into a perfectly sanitary condition." Then the always neighborly Baron, who in her father's absence had given Sonya away, broke a

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loaf of bread over her head in augury of prosperity; and some one handed her a sieve of corn and wheat which she was supposed to cast in the air, as an augury of fertility, afterwards tossing the sieve up onto her husband's roof-tree. Unfortunately, the bride, not being a very skillful thrower, had missed her aim, so that the sieve came tumbling down again; but one of the grooms-men, to avert the bad omen, had been quick to leap up onto the slates and set the sieve on the roof-tree before any malicious spirits could have noticed. Further to foil these *domachi*, sometimes friendly to man and sometimes not, Sonya had then stepped into the house over a dish of water; and there the first to greet her, according to custom, was a wailing new-born infant boy.

"Most indelicate," commented Miss Endicott. "Indeed, the whole thing sounds utterly heathenish."

"Any more heathenish," suggested Sonya, "than certain wedding customs of our own? Think it over, aunt dear!"

The next in her series of Jugoslav entertainments did much to restore the lady's rather shaken equilibrium. They dined, the two Kraniks and herself and a very pleasant company, with Baron Sverlja and his wife at the house Orašac, where they sat down to one of the most perfectly appointed tables of Miss Endicott's experience. Delicate Herend china, crested plate, embossed Venetian glass which gleamed like jewels against the exquisite lace of the cloth, none of these were lost upon Miss Endicott; any more than was the rare quality of

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her host, simple and courtly gentleman that he was, or his wife, a lady whose faintly-worn loveliness had much the luminous quality of Sonya's own, and whose serene indifference to passing modes in dress would have done credit to Beacon Street itself. With Madame Ivana Miss Endicott found herself immediately *en rapport*; they spoke, whether it happened to be somewhat European English or very American French, the same language.

"That," she said to her niece afterwards, in high approval, "is obviously a union—rare enough in these days, unfortunately—which has stood the test."

"Dear me!—let us hope so," murmured Sonya, "since they have been married only a few months."

"A few months?" exclaimed Miss Endicott. "Why, but they must be quite my age!" This Adriatic sea air, she reflected, irrelevantly, seemed to possess more warming, stimulating properties than the Atlantic sort.

In due time she was inducted into the Literary Circle, at a special meeting held in a certain open-air café which forms the center of Dubrovnik's social activities. The litterateurs in force occupied one side of a very long table, with the center chair elevated slightly above the rest; and in this was placed Miss Endicott, the shrinking cynosure of all eyes—who, however, as has been indicated, was not unaccustomed to platform appearances. It proved a trifle disconcerting when the gypsy orchestra leader, singling her out for especial favor, left his place to come to the table and play shamelessly "into the ear," as the saying goes; so that several

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of the gentlemen present signified grave approval by impaling banknotes on the end of his fiddle-bow.

"Good gracious! I thought only our *nouveau riche* Americans tipped like this," murmured Sophia to her niece. "Can literary people hereabouts afford such extravagance?"

"Of course not. That's why they enjoy it so," replied the other.

The Literary Circle settled down presently to the serious business of speech-making. Several poets and poetesses had dedicated lyric odes to the guest of honor, which they declaimed at length, allowing Sonya full opportunity for translation. The Mayor himself, who in his lighter moments also dabbled in verse, had composed and learned by heart an English peroration in which he likened the Kraniks' distinguished relative to the Goddess of Liberty from New York Harbor, holding aloft her torch of enlightenment to all the world.

"A tribute," murmured Sonya, "to your activities in the line of woman suffrage, I think. They don't quite know what it's all about; but any kind of freedom is enough to set off the fireworks with a people who've been fighting for five hundred years or so to accomplish their own."

Miss Endicott's few well-chosen words of response were uttered, felicitously, in French—deliberate Bostonian French, not over Gallicized, it being part of the Endicott tradition to keep up one's languages after col-

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lege. This innovation proved very popular, not only with the Literary Circle, but with the café at large, many of whose patrons left their own tables to crowd appreciatively near. Among them Miss Endicott was pained to observe several women whose faces were concealed, not by a mere veil, but by a thick black curtain. At least, she thought, the unfortunate creatures did not appear to be confined entirely to their harems.

One gentleman was so gratified by Miss Endicott's lapse into a comprehensible tongue that when a flower-girl appeared with her tray, he purchased a *dinar's* worth of bouquet, which he sent in nameless compliment to the Goddess of Liberty. These happened, incredibly enough, to be the first flowers Sophia Endicott had ever received from any man, and she fastened the offering upon her coat-dress lapel with flushed confusion. Others in the café, pleased with such obvious pleasure, followed the gallant example, so that bouquets began to rain on her from every direction; and all at once the Mayor, summoning the flower-girl to his side, with a lordly gesture emptied the entire contents of her tray upon the table before Miss Endicott, so that she was almost hidden behind floral offerings.

"Why," she said, rather tremulous over it, "how perfectly absurd of them!" and burst out laughing. It was rare laughter, so surprisingly girlish and infectious that in a moment the whole café was laughing with her, and applauding and cheering; and the literary

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meeting ended in a quite unprecedented atmosphere of what Germans call *Gemülichkeit*.

The next day, missing her aunt at the hotel and following her down into the town's central shopping street, Sonya was astonished to encounter the lady emerging from an establishment which bore above its door the cryptic sign: *Frizerski Salon za Dame*.

"My word, aunt! What," she exclaimed, "have you been doing at a beauty parlor? Not letting them *frizerski* your good gray locks out of all recognition!"

"Hardly," replied Sophia, with dignity. "I have merely had my nails manicured. What with all this party-going, and speech-making, and masculine kissing of hands, I rather thought ——"

"Of course! You wanted," finished Sonya gravely, as she hesitated, "to do the Goddess of Liberty credit."

Perhaps the most memorable souvenir of her début into Yugoslav society was an affair given by one of the Kranik circle known generally as Kuma Lepa; although the word *lepa*, meaning beautiful, seemed curiously inapposite. Miss Endicott had noted the muttering old scarecrow of a creature, hair always awry, dressed as if from the rag-bag, hovering in the background of many of the entertainments given in her honor. She was, explained Sonya, a *kuma* of Niko's, one of his all-too-many godchildren, and therefore, according to custom, practically a member of the Kranik family.

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"His godchild? She's old enough to be his grandmother!" commented Miss Endicott.

Age, unfortunately, was no barrier to adopting *kumas*, said Sonya, ruefully; nor was poverty, nor yet a somewhat overflowing household of blood relatives. The old woman, already old in Niko's boyhood, had appeared in Dubrovnik from no one knew where. Many believed that she was a gypsy strayed from her tribe; others thought her the victim of some tragedy which had robbed her of her wits. None begrudged her such food as she was able to pick up here and there, since her peculiarities were inoffensive—a queer distrust of any strange roof, an even queerer dislike of money. If a kindly passer-by put into her hand some little coin, she would instantly, as if it burned her, thrust it upon some one else, or bury it, with furtive squirrel-like gestures, in some place to which she never returned. Harmless enough, all this, in the eyes of a city so tolerantly indifferent to the ways of strangers. But about one thing Dubrovnik is not at all indifferent: the neatness and prosperity of its appearance. Dirty, unkempt-looking persons are frequently taken into custody by zealous sanitary officials—a fact well known to the country folk, who may be seen on a market day exchanging their common working-clothes just outside the gates for Sunday attire.

Thus it happened that young Niko Kranik, on his way home from school one day, found the old beggar-woman, called in irony the "Beautiful," crouched at

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bay against a church door, fighting off tooth and nail some good-natured, laughing policemen who were trying to persuade her into a wagon belonging to the community asylum. The dumb despair in her eyes was so terrible to him that the boy, remembering the crazed creature's dread of confinement, suddenly sprang up beside her at the church door and claimed her, as was his right, to be his *kuma*; which meant that thereafter he would be responsible for her, morally and financially. She followed him without a word, close at heel like a lost dog that has been found, up the long cliff stairs to his father's house, where Danitza, with little cluckings of dismay but no thought of reproach, made her a pallet in the open woodshed, since she had such dread of roofs.

And in the end, added Sonya, Niko's boyish quixotism had been justified; Kuma Lepa was become quite an important person in the community; so much so that the municipality now supplied her a clean little two-room outbuilding of the city jail, whose roof she did not fear because it was her own. She had become the town's official body-washer.

"A body-washer?" It was a post Miss Endicott connected vaguely, for the moment, with automobiles. "Or do you mean, perhaps, some sort of public bath attendant?"

But the bodies Kuma Lepa washed, explained Sonya, were corpses. It had come about during one of the epidemics which occasionally swept the ancient walled



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town before the recent installation of a modern sewage system. On this occasion undertakers, priests, Sisters of Charity, had found themselves with more than they could manage, and people left their own houses out of fear of the unburied victims within. Not so Kuma Lepa. She seemed always to sense, in her strange crazed way, when death was imminent to a household, and to feel that in the interval before burial, the unwanted and lonely dead belonged to her; and such was her gentle, almost maternal tenderness with them that ever since bereaved persons, even those who could not bear that stranger hands perform the last services of love, were grateful enough for the unfailing presence of Kuma Lepa.

It was this somewhat macabre godchild of Nikola Kranik's who arrived at his house one Sunday morning, more incoherent than usual with excitement, to invite the household to a celebration in honor of the Kraniks' distinguished relative from America.

"I might have known it!" murmured Sonya, chuckling over her aunt's dismay. "They've a perfectly insatiable generosity, these people. But she keeps muttering something I can't quite make out about '*kokita*,' which means chicken—a delicacy rather beyond her means, I'm sure. I can't help wondering just how she came by it, whether by gift or theft, or even if the fowl may have died a natural death. However, we'll have to accept, of course; no getting out of that! As a matter of fact, I wouldn't miss it for worlds."

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Miss Endicott repressed a slight shudder. "I would. Gladly!" she remarked; not to be outdone, however, by her niece's sense of social duty.

Kuma Lepa returned at the hour appointed to conduct them personally to her party, trotting happily ahead with a glance over her shoulder now and then to make sure they followed, chanting a sort of pæan of invocation to all she passed to join the festivities. Several, Baron Sverlja among them, turned out of good humor or curiosity to accompany her. Ten or twelve strong, the guests came to a low door opening into a room almost completely bare of furnishing except for the hospitable board itself—literally a board laid across trestles—upon which was set a large earthen jug of water. Their hostess, by now in a perfect frenzy of cordiality, urged them to refresh themselves freely from this, while the rest of the entertainment was made ready. She disappeared, with an air of joyous mystery, into the room at the back, and presently emerged bearing a large wooden chopping-bowl heaped high with popcorn.

"*'Kokice'*—of course!" breathed Sonya, with relief. "Not *'kokica.'* You must admit that chicken and popcorn do sound alike, to the non-Serbian ear."

That was the entire entertainment, selected, no doubt, with a view to its filling qualities; and Miss Endicott, who happened to dislike cereals of any sort, ate of it, nevertheless, until she thought it advisable to ask the address of the nearest English-speaking

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physician. . . . Later, with an impulse to show some substantial recognition of Kuma Lepa's hospitality, she opened her purse. The memory of her hostess' idiosyncrasy stopped her. On second thought, she removed some flowers from her manly lapel—it had become quite an ordinary thing for Miss Endicott to go about publicly garlanded with floral offerings—and fastened them rather awkwardly to the dress of Kuma Lepa. The latter clapped her hands like a child, while Baron Sverlja, across the table, bowed as if he himself had been the recipient of the courtesy.

"That," commented Niko on their way home, "is why my people so greatly honor you, Gospa Sophia—because you see, like us, with the eyes of the heart rather than of the head. You have heard that the word '*serbi*' means 'from the heart'—no?"

Miss Endicott cherished this compliment as only compliments are cherished which one suspects of being not entirely deserved.

She wondered later whether her odd impulse of fellow-feeling toward the official body-washer might have been responsible for another unique compliment which was paid herself not long afterward. The Mayor waited upon her—less, as His Honor explained, in a personal than in a public capacity, and accompanied by a small committee. It had been brought to the attention of the municipality that so distinguished a visitor was sojourning in their midst, he said, not, for unavoidable reasons, beneath the family roof upon whose

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shelter she might naturally have counted, but in a public hostelry—a fact which put greatly to shame the traditions of the country. Their own city in particular, he declared, warming to his words after the manner of all true orators, had been from time immemorial not only the devoted patron of all culture, but the inviolable refuge of whoever came to its gates requiring asylum. “‘Dubrovnik, indeed,’ ”—His Honor quoted impressively from its official guide-book—“‘is a small city, but suffices for the world.’ ” Therefore, because of their guest’s widely-known services to the cause of liberty—as to whose nature His Honor himself was obviously a trifle vague—and because it was felt that the presence of such an ornament to her sex could not fail to serve their community as a beacon-light of female example, he, Dubrovnik’s chief executive, had been instructed to do what was in his power to persuade the cultured visitor to regard Dubrovnik as her permanent home; especially since it was understood—here he lowered a tactful voice—that misfortune had obliged her recently to relinquish her ancestral home in the Americas.

There had reverted to the city’s possession, he continued, descending to practicalities, a certain monastery, now in disuse, which served occasionally to house such guests as Dubrovnik desired particularly to honor—any of whose apartments were henceforth at Miss Endicott’s full and free disposal. True, the building had also served from time to time as a public pest-house,

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and would so serve again if occasion required; but the climate of their city being so salubrious, and the present system of sanitation so felicitous in result, it was thought unlikely that any such epidemics would recur.

Sonya, who happened to be dining with her aunt that evening, clutched at her husband's hand beneath the table in pleasurable perturbation, eyeing her aunt's face as the implications of this offer struck home. But the Endicott breeding stood the test. In her answering speech to the Mayor—she and His Honor seemed habitually to converse by means of sonorous little addresses—Miss Endicott said, and meant it, that while deeply touched by so unique a courtesy on the part of a civic body, she had already initiated plans to establish herself more stably in Dubrovnik. She had even, Sophia continued (quite unexpectedly to herself) gone so far as to consider engaging the services of her niece's husband, who happened to be an architect as well as a master mason, for the purposes of erecting some little modest *pied-à-terre* on Dubrovnik soil—perhaps in the form of an addition to his own house; something which, while quite unpretentious, would yet afford sufficient shelter for certain valued possessions, such as her father's books.

"Dear me!" she said, nervously, after the committee had accepted wine and made a highly gratified departure, "I'm afraid I rather took you by surprise, my dears! In fact, I quite took myself by surprise. You know how, when one is speaking impromptu, one's

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inspiration does sometimes get just a little out of hand? Yet, now that I think of it more coolly, the idea is not entirely impracticable. I intend in the future to spend the greater part of my time traveling, but"—she spoke with some deprecation—"it might be rather pleasant to feel that one had some place of return where one was, so to speak, expected. And in my absences, you might yourselves find some such addition as I spoke of useful—a library, say, with an extra sleeping-room and bath? Of course I should not care in any way to intrude ——"

It was Niko who interrupted here, his expressive face aglow with pleasure. "But, Gospa Sophia, it is what I have most wished, ever since we heard of your coming—that I had but money enough in hand to build at once just such an addition. Look, it is already so planned in my blueprints." His pencil made havoc on the tablecloth. "Here at right angles the long room, paneled with shelves for books; behind it some suitable sleeping-quarters; balancing on the opposite side, more rooms—yes, and a bath American also, my Sonya!—for our growing family." He and his wife exchanged one of those very married looks which so frequently embarrassed Miss Endicott. "And in between, a flagged courtyard, with our medlar-tree for its center. So! The little peasant *domachia* becomes at once a fine sea villa, almost a *zamak*."

"You are sure," asked Sophia Endicott, with a hesi-

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tation new to her, "that you really would not mind having an interfering old spinster aunt about?"

Sonya gave her a quick, grave smile—between women of one blood there is often small need for speech—and again left her husband to answer. "Mind?" he repeated, in surprise. "But was it not because of our need of you that you have paid us the honor to come to us? . . . My Sonya has lacked here some one to talk with of those many things I cannot; lately I have seen, more than once, that she is thinking of matters of which she does not speak. Our women lack as yet the polished culture of her American friends. Also, she will soon have extra cares upon her that require the wisdom of experience. A house without any old in it—*tchh!*" He shrugged, scornfully. "It is as incomplete as a house without any young!" . . .

Miss Endicott deliberately let her thoughts dwell on this conversation while she sat, some days later, on the bench Niko had built around the medlar-tree that was one day to be the center of his courtyard. She had need of something pleasant to think about. The candid processes of Nature were pressing rather close; too close for comfort. It chagrined her not a little to realize how much more useful ignorant old Danitza was making herself about Sonya's house than was Sonya's aunt, for all her creed of efficiency. She could hear the good creature bustling about inside, humming cheerfully, coming every now and then to the door to smile re-

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assurance at Miss Endicott. "One would imagine," thought that lady, tartly, "that it is I who need encouragement, instead of Sonya!"

Only once since the thing began had the girl sent for her; a pale, smiling, preoccupied Sonya, propped up in bed, sewing on some smallish flannel object. "Eleventh-hour preparations. I always was," she confessed, "a terrible procrastinator! But, aunt dear, I want to ask you something now, without any more procrastinating. Just in case anything should happen to me ——"

"Nonsense!" interrupted her aunt, briskly. "What could happen to you? After all, this isn't an operation, nor even an illness, really. Just a perfectly natural phenomenon that all women go through with—more or less. Besides, having taken the stand you have in this rather conspicuous marriage of yours, you've got to see the experiment through to its logical conclusion. You can't beg the question, you know! Endicotts never beg questions."

"Hurray! The Union forever! Thanks for the reminder, aunt," smiled Sonya. "Nevertheless, as I am rather oldish for this sort of experiment ——"

"Oldish? Absurd!" snapped Sophia. "Nobody's oldish nowadays at thirty-odd!"

"No? My mistake," murmured her niece. "However, just in case Nature does happen to make the same mistake, I want to ask you a favor. The fact is," she added, slowly, "I almost hope something may happen



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to me. It would be easier so. No, I'm not being morbid"—she held up a hand to ward off further interruption. "It's only that— The fact is, aunt dear, I'd much rather die now, all at once, than little by little, heart first—as I shall most certainly do when I leave Niko and take his child away from him. You see, he counts on us so terribly!"

Miss Endicott found herself for the moment with nothing to say. Fate seemed to be playing into her hands rather disconcertingly.

The girl continued: "Yet of course you and I know there's nothing else I could do, in decency, as soon as the baby's here. It's all very well to take liberties with one's own future, but with other futures—that's different. My great error"—she gave a wry little grimace—"was in making no allowance for the strength of my own primitive maternal instinct. Aunt, I cannot—I simply dare not—bring up a child in this environment. Not a little twentieth-century American child. Why, they still swaddle their babies here! Sew 'em up for the winter, more or less. And instead of prescribed diets, sanitary feeding-bottles, all the modern sort of thing, they fetch in the nearest wet-nurse."

Miss Endicott murmured, clearing her throat in some embarrassment, that she had always understood that the natural mother ——

"Not," interrupted Sonya, ruefully, "when the natural mother happens to be rather over age, I'm afraid, and has run a good deal to top-growth. And even if

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the poor little victim were to survive the early perils of swaddling-clothes and wet-nursing, what then? No proper advantages, none of the opportunities that are its birthright. Aunt, it wouldn't be fair, and you know it, to bring up young of ours, Endicott young, like poor little Serbian peasants. And it might be years before Niko would consent to take us back to America—he's got the racial stubbornness that goes with his racial pride. Oh, I've known from the first that when our child came I'd have to go without him—and I can't bear it! That's why I'd rather—well, pass the buck to you; if you don't mind?"

"To me?" repeated Sophia, somewhat dazed.

"Yes. I want you to promise," said the girl, tensely, "that if anything does happen to me, you'll take my baby home yourself. Niko will let you, don't worry! You've only to tell him that I wanted it."

Miss Endicott's first reaction to this request was a selfish one. At the vision of her return to familiar pursuits hampered by a barbarously swaddled brunette infant, wet-nurse and all, she opened her lips for dismayed protest. Instead she found herself saying, "But consider poor Nicholas himself, my dear!"

Sonya's smile was quite different from her usual quizzical little glint of amusement. "So you're thinking of him, too? Niko's a good deal of a man, you know; he'll take what's coming to him. And we've had rather more than our share of happiness already, he and I. . . . Promise?"

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Sophia wished to repeat, easily, that nothing of course would happen—to warn her niece against the nervous vaporings usual to women at such times—to pooh-pooh, in fact, the whole matter; but noting the largeness of the girl's pupils, the gray little change that had come about her tightly pressed lips, she ended by promising in some haste.

Sonya laid aside her sewing. "Thanks," she said, quietly. "Go back to the garden now, there's a good aunt, and stand off all the well-wishers, and keep an efficient eye on everything for me. Be sure that everybody gets plenty to eat, especially the nurse and doctor. Keep up their strength, by all means!"

Fortunately, Miss Endicott recalled, both spoke English; in times of stress she found the European languages singularly inadequate. "Would you like me to call your husband now?" she inquired, nervously, noting another shadow of pain cross Sonya's face.

The girl managed her little familiar crowd of laughter. "Heavens, no! It will be hours yet. Besides, he's keeping an eye out for a signal. Isn't it lucky that he happens to be superintending work on that breakwater just below?"

Miss Endicott, on sentry duty beneath the medlar-tree, could see him there, and found the sight oddly reassuring. Sonya had spoken truth; it was being hours. People came and went along the garden path with solicitous inquiry—all sorts of people—neighbor women, a deputation from the Literary Circle, Baron

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Sverlja and his gentle lady, the sonorous Mayor. To all Miss Endicott was adequately polite, if somewhat distant; there were moments, she felt, when a family is really entitled to its privacy. The house was very quiet—too quiet; Danitza had stopped her humming now. She was grateful when the kind creature brought her out a little tray of food, and stood over her silently while she ate, patting her shoulder in a quite sisterly way before going back to Sonya. Miss Endicott dared not follow; she felt out of her element.

Presently she dozed awhile, and woke to find the garden dim with dusk. She looked for Nicholas, but saw that the workmen had left off for the day. No doubt he had already come, passing by her as she slept—"like one of the original Foolish Virgins!" she thought, disgustedly. No more well-wishers entered, although several people lingered near the gate. The doctor came out, and she stood up with relief to question him; but he did not notice her, and got into his automobile and drove rapidly away. Presently he returned with another man, a tall, bearded person who spoke German.

A moon rose. It was, Miss Endicott realized, the night of Michaelmas, that which old poets called "Summersende"—the last moon of September. A queer sense of faery was growing in Sonya's garden, fantastic, exquisite, not a little sinister. Shadows slanted eerily in the faint sea wind, bushes took on distorted gnomelike shapes, the medlar-tree, so friendly and familiar by day, was suddenly become a gnarled old witch with menac-

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ing, writhen arms. Miss Endicott, cold and forgotten at her sentry duty, wondered uneasily what forces were abroad in this pagan night, whether of good or evil. Those nervous vaporings of women did sometimes prove, of course, to be premonitions. She recalled, absurdly enough, that Sonya's sieve had slipped down from the roof on her wedding-day. She began instinctively to pray, "God of our fathers—" and stopped, abashed; she was not accustomed to personal supplication, preferring to leave that sort of thing to those trained for it.

Then through the silence a thin sound came, that might have been a night bird, crying. It was not a night bird. It was the sound for which she had been waiting many hours.

Still she dared not go into the house, but sat, trembling a little with the relief of it, waiting for some one to come and tell her. "They'll let me know when they are ready," she thought, quite humbly. "Nobody's thinking of me just now. Why should they?"

Presently she knew that somebody had come, was moving soundlessly down the path toward her; a witchlike figure compact of all the uncanniness of the uncanny night, ragged garments fluttering, elfin locks astray about a peering face. For one startled moment it seemed to Miss Endicott—a trifle *surexcitée*, somewhat beyond herself, as the expression goes—that the menacing medlar-tree had taken on not only human shape,

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but locomotion. Then she recognized the figure, and rose to bar its path.

"No, Kuma Lepa!" she said, firmly, though her voice had an unexpected tremor to it. "No! You have made a mistake. You cannot go in now. You are not needed here!"

But the washer of bodies, not understanding English, passed without a look or a word, and went questing on into the house Sonya and her lover had built together for their happiness. . . .

The moon of Summersende had waned into a gibbous ghost when Miss Endicott sat again on the bench under the medlar-tree, waiting for Sonya's husband, who had asked to speak with her alone. When his voice sounded behind her, she did not turn to look at him; for some time, indeed, she had avoided looking at him, finding it difficult to meet the tragedy of his too-expressive eyes. There seemed to her something almost indecent in the way these non-Anglo-Saxons abandoned themselves to their feelings, whether of joy or grief.

"Gospa Sophia," said the voice, respectful as always, but quite lacking its usual vibrant buoyancy, "you will wish, no doubt, to return soon to America—yes? Then I think that you must please take my Sonya with you. Here she is no longer happy."

"Happy?" repeated the lady, brusque with her surprise. "Don't be absurd, my dear fellow! How could any woman be happy who has just lost a first child?"

"My Sonya has not been happy," he said, steadily,

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"since long before this, Gospa Sophia. I have seen her eyes when she did not know; I have seen the shadow in them even when her lips smiled, or kissed. Why this should be I have not understood; but my mother, who is wise in such ways, said that it was because of loneliness for her own people, that when the child came she would be as before. But now there is not to be any child, so—" He paused abruptly.

A pang of unwonted and rather poignant emotion touched Miss Endicott. She would have liked to explain that it was the very coming of a baby which had first distressed Sonya, and why; but could find no adequate words. She said, instead: "Nonsense, my dear Nicholas! The girl's stronger than she looks. Of course there will be another child; no doubt too many of them."

"Not for my Sonya. No!" he said, wincing. "She is not as our women, to whom the affairs of life and death arrive more easily. She shall not suffer so again through me. Never. Ah, God, if she had died of it! . . . Therefore it is better that she go away now, Gospa Sophia, away from me who love as a man loves, who am not fine enough to be intrusted with the possession of a being so rare, so fragile. What is the lack of sons to a man, beside the loss of such a woman as my Sonya?"

Miss Endicott became conscious of a peculiar aching of the jaws, a most curious tingling of the finger tips that seemed to presage tears. She had seen this great

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fellow with his baby, the powerful hands, gentle as any woman's, laying it away in the coffin that was to be its cradle, the tearless eyes brooding over it there with a look as deep as old Danitza's. Here was another of those emotions over which non-Anglo-Saxons exercised so little restraint: paternity. And then quite suddenly the dam of her own habitual restraint gave way under a flood of long-pent womanhood. There descended upon her, in place of tears, the gift of tongues—heritage from a long line of preachers, writers, educators. She made to an audience of one the most eloquent of all her many little impromptu addresses.

Would he dare, mere male that he was, to deny a woman her God-given right of maternity? That, declared Sophia Endicott roundly, was cowardice! Sonya herself was no such weakling, to be spared her share of suffering and grief and death. These she must face, was facing now, even as her foremothers had faced them, unflinching. She had married, not merely because of the usual universal urge called love, but because of some deeper-sensed, innermost want of a fine nature. Near descendant of pioneers who had at need created for themselves a new world, the girl did not find herself too fragile to go pioneering in her own turn, that she might help to create a newer world, with wider boundaries and loyalties than had sufficed her ancestors—a United States of Humanity, as it were, which should replace their narrower United States of America. For this cause she had chosen to accept



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proudly, with eyes open, certain bounds and bonds to which women of the older civilizations had long yielded blindly, slavishly, piteously. And of the accomplished sacrifice, there must be living sign and symbol. Sonya herself needed—this her aunt had from her own lips, she told him—to make root-growth now, rather than top-growth; to come closer to life than was possible in a civilization which does not habitually live, like his own people, “from the heart.” Were Sonya’s children to be denied the early root-growth the girl knew herself to have lacked?

“Therefore,” concluded Miss Endicott, using that effective little drop from rhetorical heights to practical everyday speech which had clinched her victories on many a platform, “you will please begin at once the addition to your house as we have planned, my dear Nicholas; for I shall wish to be close at hand to assist my niece in the proper rearing of a family, until such time as we shall all find it practicable to return to accomplish the American part of their education. Particularly if they are girls.”

In the ardor of special pleading, the far-carrying platform voice had risen somewhat beyond the lady’s realization, so that the pair in the garden were startled by what seemed to be applause issuing from Sonya’s window.

“Well done, Sophia Endicott!” her voice came out to them, faint but clear. “You’ve said it all for me. But what do you mean by holding assignments with my

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husband, out there in the secret dark? You'll make your Mayor jealous. Niko, come right in here to me!"

He went, running. Her aunt, left alone with the dim-hovering garden shapes, the gnomelike bushes, the threatening witch of a medlar-tree, snapped defiant fingers.

"That," she said—presumably to whatever *domachi* might be lurking thereabouts—"for your omens and presages and portents! Piffle!"



*Part Two*

# THE JUGO BLOWS



*Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring*

—ALEXANDER POPE

TWO LOVERS PASS





#### IV

### TWO LOVERS PASS

ON A certain day of March—the 9th, to be exact—all the birds who have been wintering fashionably in Egypt arrive in a body to open the season at Corfu, so that the ancient groves of oak and ilex and honeycombed olives, only the day before quite gray and silent, burst into sudden song. On that date, not long since, the somnolence of the Grand Hôtel d'Angleterre et Belle Venise woke into a similar vivacity. Brooms made eddying flurries of dust along the corridors; orders crackled with the sharpness of musketry down through the con-

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venient trap-door which opens above the *concierge's* desk from the living-apartments of the Herr Direktor; and the Dresden soup-tureen, overflowing with seasonable flora, appeared to mark, as always, a table of special honor.

"It must be somebody frightfully important this time," commented one of a pair of ladies who happened at the moment, because of their reputed American wealth, to be occupying the bridal *suite de luxe*. "See! Not only the soup-tureen is with us, but the Herr Direktor is personally conducting two of the fringed red-plush armchairs out from the drawing-room."

At the Hotel of England and Beautiful Venice, as elsewhere in a happy land which knows neither fly nor mosquito nor other winged pest, it is customary to dine *en plein air* upon a tanbark terrace, together with all the polite world of Corfu—a very polite world indeed; the gentlemen, despite their conventional Western dress, carrying odd little rosaries of conversation-beads, the ladies, of Byzantine rather than Hellenic type, with certain Oriental touches to their near-Paris costuming—bracelets and heavy chains of silver, a good deal of perfumery, rather too many baroque pearls. The larger polite world that was wont to grace this classic atmosphere—pre-Victorian English of the Occupation Period, court followers of that most romantic of wandering empresses, Elizabeth of Austria, and of her somewhat less romantic successor, the Prussian Wilhelm—has ceased long since to frequent Corfu; truly



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"the abode of gods whose shrine no longer burns." But since those gods who left their trace upon the island's loveliness were, if tradition is to be credited, of notably amorous nature, the place is still very popular with honeymoon couples of that Adriatic neighborhood.

"I see the new table is being laid in the shrubbery, and laid for two. Another swarthy bride and groom, I suppose!" murmured the older American lady, sighing. "Let us hope they are not the prosperous sort, who will expect to be given our *suite de luxe*."

From the balcony of this, as from a box in the theatre, one was able to observe whatever went on, not only upon the terrace below, but in the comparative seclusion of a small adjoining garden, thickly screened from the more obvious tables by bamboo and other verdure, and discreetly lighted by the dimmest of colored electric bulbs. The apartment had other desirable features than this intimate vista—notably, a marble mantelpiece carved in jovial cupids of the well-dressed English type; a vaulted ceiling upon which was frescoed a faded and very *déshabillée* Venus, solicitously attended by little loves of a more Latin nature; even a bathroom of sorts, whose water-heating arrangements required the anxious attention of half the hotel staff, bearing olive-branches, but whose substantial Berlin-made tub was decorated felicitously in forget-me-nots. These comforts, material and æsthetic, it would be hard to relinquish.

But the lady's fear proved no less than prophecy; a

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confidential knock at the door announced, very shortly, a visit from the director.

Herr Hoff, like most European hotel managers who are not Swiss, was of Austrian extraction, and did not lack the soothing polyglot amenities of his kind; nevertheless, through the stream of apologies, regrets and compliments, his cherished American guests were enabled to detect the fact that what he expected of them was to vacate their present quarters immediately, in favor of another apartment which, while less striking of *décor*, might be considered somewhat more suitable for the needs of ladies traveling alone—he lifted a deprecatory eye toward the amorous candors of the ceiling. The suggested substitute, one very long balconied chamber running the full width of the house, bisected by a row of movable screens, commanded not only a view of the terrace at one end, but at the other a view of the hotel entrance, and even of the harbor beyond. Nothing could transpire in the entire vicinity, declared Herr Hoff with mounting enthusiasm, unknown to occupants of the end apartment. True, there was neither salon nor bath attached—but what need of running water when one had always at hand the running feet of old Annunciata or her daughter, Maddalena? And there was an entresol which combined in its sole person the advantages of both bath and salon—armchairs, table, sofa; with, in addition, a commodious tin sitz-tub, more or less concealed behind a Nottingham lace curtain.

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"The idea being," murmured the older lady, "that while one of us is entertaining company, the other may pursue undisturbed the requirements of the toilet? How chummy!"

"*Nicht war?*" agreed the Herr Direktor, encouragingly.

But upon realizing that his guests seemed disinclined to concur in the recommended change of quarters, he abandoned cajolery and flung himself frankly upon their mercies. Only within the hour, he told them, had he received a much-delayed cablegram from a noble Englishman, a former *habitué* of the establishment, requiring him to make ready the usual apartments for his arrival by that day's boat; the usual apartments, unfortunately, including those now occupied by themselves.

"Now isn't that just too bad," commented the younger of the ladies, unfeelingly. "Why not offer your noble Englishman the double-duty entresol?"

Herr Hoff, having learned from his Latin neighborhood the art of shrugging, had shoulders as expressive as a Spanish dancer's castanets. One degree of the gesture indicated courteous indifference; the second expressed doubtful acquiescence; the third registered a quite despairing helplessness. It was the third degree that he now brought into play. The matter, he explained, his shoulders at his ears, was one entirely of sentiment; one comprehended the insatiable sentiment of the English! Nor was it for himself that Sir Ian

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Wyndham desired the special apartments indicated—in fact, said Herr Hoff, with an amused little shrug of deprecation, the noble gentleman had always required to be given quarters for himself on another floor. It was entirely for the pleasure of his noble lady, accustomed naturally to an atmosphere of the utmost *luxe*.

“Do you mean,” interrupted the older American, with some interest, “the General Sir Ian Wyndham who was one of the heroes of Gallipoli?”

But wars and their fading echoes were matters of small import to an harassed little gentleman with an out-of-the-way Greek *pension* to run.

“Madame is then acquainted with Sir Wyndham?” he inquired, brightening. “So, she will well realize how it is not possible to disappoint so lavish and regular a patron of the house. Always with the birds, in the month of March, since their first meeting. Only now so many months of March have passed that one had begun to think they would not come again. Time is in the end too strong, *nicht war?*—even for English sentiment.” His sigh had a touch of unconscious pathos.

“Oh, so the Wyndhams met each other here, and return now and then to renew the honeymoon?” remarked the older American, with a touch of sympathy. “I did not realize that Lady Wyndham would be coming with him.”

The director showed surprise. Then he permitted himself the Santa Clausian gesture of laying one finger

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eloquently along his nose. "Herr Gott, let us hope not so!" he murmured. "But is there, then, a Lady Wyndham? I have thought no, madame. The English do not demand of themselves always to marry, as we others, they have not our consideration of family, of property; for them merely to love is all. What a race! The lady of whom I spoke"—his manner became still more confidential—"is one whom mesdames will no doubt recognize on sight. Therefore to withhold the name would be inutile."

He mentioned it, not without proper pride. It was indeed a name once known throughout pre-war Europe—that of the great Hungarian *danseuse*, Nadya, rival in her day to Pavlowa and Isadora Duncan; wife, in private life, to a somewhat notorious devotee of pleasure, one Baron Varády. Both of them being high in the favor of the Kaiser, the royal season at Corfu invariably found the pair in attendance upon His Majesty. And here for a number of years the lady had also been joined, before the season began, by an English admirer of the utmost loyalty and discretion, in order that they might enjoy the coming of spring together, true *amis de la quiétude*. Indeed, the gentleman's discretion had been so great as not to arouse the sensitive jealousy of even a Magyar husband—after all, many English came to spend the between-seasons at Corfu, during its period of international fame. Only war, therefore, had interrupted this pleasant custom, as it interrupted so many pleasant customs; no doubt

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insurmountable difficulties had arisen to prevent further reunion between two friends who happened to be citizens of warring countries. But now the pair, having engaged to meet again after a certain lapse of years, were returning once more to share the spring together.

"What a resurrection, *hein*? A true Easter of the heart," murmured Herr Hoff, his voice tender with Teutonic appreciation. "After twenty years! Only with Englishmen could such a thing conceive itself—the cold being ever of the more faithful temperament."

A brief silence followed his departure, while the American ladies prepared resignedly to evacuate their *suite de luxe* in favor of what was obviously a prior claim.

"Our hotel," murmured the elder of them, at last, "does not seem to be quite the staid old family hostelry we thought it, my dear; the Venetian influence appears to predominate over the British. Or am I wrong? After all, he always took rooms on another floor. Do you suppose the affair could have been more or less platonic?"

The younger favored her with an amused glance. "Don't," she murmured, "be naïve! A stage beauty, protégée of the late lamented Kaiser? This is Europe, remember, not Arcady; nor yet our innocent pre-war Middle West."

"I suppose not—although I sometimes think," commented the other, mildly, "that it wouldn't do your post-war generation a bit of harm to have its mind

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scrubbed out with soap occasionally. I dare say we ought to be moving on somewhere else, then."

"Over my dead body," was the firm reply. "If you're trying to spare my maiden sensibilities, pray don't! It isn't often one gets a chance to see an Easter of the heart transpiring under one's very eyes. As for respectability—a liaison that's outlasted a world war, and a twenty-year interregnum to boot, sounds to me positively conjugal! It could give pointers, certainly, to many marriages of our acquaintance."

In the end, their change of quarters proved advantageous, enabling them presently to observe the arrival at the hotel entrance of a rather impressive cavalcade, composed of three of the island's open *carozzas*; the first containing a lady with a small parasol shading her, vivid pallor, and an obese, fur-collared canine of the griffon type in stertorous attendance; the second, a swarthy, heavily mustached maid-servant, in charge of the lesser luggage; while the third *carozza* overflowed with major luggage in the way of steamer trunk, blanket roll, tea-basket, leather cushion, and other traveling essentials. Evidently Nadya, Baroness Varády, was in the habit of making herself quite at home *sur le branch*.

On the steps, drawn up in ceremonial array to greet her, stood the entire cosmopolitan personnel of the hotel, headed by the Herr Direktor bearing an imposing floral offering. Behind him genuflected the suave Greek *concierge*; the three stolid Maltese waiters; the two

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overworked little Italian chambermaids, mother and daughter, who served also as porters, bell-boys, boot-blacks, and general handy men to the establishment; and as climax to the demonstration, haughty Aristide the chef, immaculate in starched cap and apron, twirling a gallant French mustache in the lady's direction.

All of these she greeted with radiant smiles and gay gestures of the parasol, addressing more than one by name, each in his own tongue. "What, thou, 'Nunciata *mia*?"—this to the elder of the two chambermaids, bobbing up and down in a perfect ecstasy of respect. "Then assuredly I need not have brought my own maid to make me comfortable!—*Et regarde-moi Aristide!* Why are you not preparing one of your incomparable soufflés for me this instant?—*Aber, mein lieber Hoff,* never was host more kind, more considerate—to remember even the freesias, which I adore! And you have made, like the rest of us, a few gray hairs, *hein?*—always so becoming to a man of substance. Truly, to find them all here still, after so many changes, these my dear, good friends, is like coming back to the heart's home!" Tears were in her laughing voice, tears which she made no attempt to hide in her lustrous eyes.

"Thank Heaven she is still perfectly fascinating," murmured one of the unseen watchers above, in some relief.

It was a type unfamiliar to them; broad brows and cheekbones and a touch of ivory in the skin giving a slight hint of the East, enhanced by a certain submis-



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sive sweetness about the lips not usual to Western faces. The voice was pure music, the slightest gesture instinct with a grace which recalled her earlier career. Not even the professional darkening of lids and lashes, nor a regrettable touch of henna in the hair, nor yet the delicate shadows about cheek and temple, like those of the Da Vinci "Saint Anne," could mar the ageing loveliness of Nadya Varády. But if she were once, as the director suggested, accustomed to an atmosphere of the utmost *luxe*, that period had passed. Any feminine eye would have noted that her dress, the customary black of smart Europeans, was more than a little worn and out of date, and that her becomingly plumed and tilted hat was unmistakably the handiwork of an amateur; nor did she wear in her ears those flashing single diamonds which are the last symbol of affluence to be discarded by an Hungarian woman of any pretense to elegance. Obviously, the halcyon days of the renowned siren, like those of the island to which she had returned, were overpast.

"If she looks like this still," commented the girl at the upper window, "I must say I can't much blame Sir Ian, brought up as he was on horse-faced blond Britannias! But why do you suppose he isn't with her?"

"Coming over on another boat, I imagine, for the sake of the proprieties. He—" She paused abruptly. At that moment the Baroness, still seated in her *carozza* as upon a throne, made a slight signal to her maid, casting about her a final smile whose determined gay-

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ety was a little painful; and they saw why she had brought with her so muscular an attendant. The grenadier-like female lifted the lady from her place, and carried her as easily as if she were a child up the hotel steps, the obese griffon yapping fussily at heel. The famous dancer had become, from the waist down, a helpless cripple.

"Oh dear! Do you suppose *he* knows?" whispered the younger of the onlookers, aghast. "Fancy letting a former lover see her again like this! Think of the courage of it!"

"Think of the utter stupid folly of it," muttered the other, almost angrily. For it was evident that into this very Continental, rather picturesque little elderly situation they had chanced upon, was now about to enter an incongruous element of the macabre.

Sir Ian Wyndham, due to arrive, according to advices from the Herr Direktor, by a late evening boat from Brindisi, was apparently an impatient lover; for the sun had barely commenced its slow decline toward the western sea when a hydroplane was to be seen alighting in the harbor; and some moments later the two Americans became aware, conspicuously recognizable amid the staccato Greek tea-table chatter on the terrace, of English words spoken in a deliberate and very English voice:

"Quite so, my dear chap. Of course you were not expecting me so early"—he appeared to be cutting short anxious apologies on the part of Herr Hoff—"so how

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could you possibly have met me? My luggage is following on the boat from Brindisi, but as that promised to be even slower than usual, I decided to save time by coming across in a plane. You see, after so many years"—there was something very disarming in his frank, boyish manner—"one was rather in haste to get here, Hoff!"

"*Aber natürlich, natürlich, mein Herr General,*" murmured the flustered director, who in moments of stress was wont to forget his other languages.

With one accord the Americans made for the window. What they saw on the terrace below was an erect, stalwart figure clad in the usual tweed knickerbockers and Norfolk jacket of the British traveler, and wearing still the thick smoked glasses which had no doubt protected his eyes from the sea glare while crossing. He was accompanied by the most correct and unmistakable of confidential manservants.

In response to Sir Ian's eager question as to whether Madame Varády would be joining him in the garden for tea, Herr Hoff was replying in a rather subdued tone, affected himself no doubt by realization of impending tragedy, that Madame la Baronne, because of the fatigues of travel, had decided not to venture downstairs again that evening.

"She's not coming down, not even for dinner?" exclaimed the Englishman, quite blankly.

Madame was instead, Herr Hoff hastened to add, expecting Sir Ian to dine with her on her veranda.

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"Can't face it quite yet, poor thing!" sighed one of the listeners above, understandingly. "She's waiting till after dark."

The balcony of madame's suite, Herr Hoff was explaining, could easily support a small table for two, as Sir Ian would no doubt recall; and the maître d'hôtel himself would personally undertake the service.

"I must say," commented the girl at the window, "that what with the extreme respectability of the valet, and the Amazonian qualities of Madame Nadya's maid, their *solitude à deux* promises to be rather well chaperoned, doesn't it? Almost too well chaperoned."

Later, they were able to ascertain that the floral soup-tureen was not entirely wasted; having observed it being carried, together with a bucket of ice containing long-necked bottles, also a series of silver-domed platters, toward their former apartment, under the solicitous personal direction of the management.

To the meeting in the balcony there were neither witnesses nor eavesdroppers; but on their way down to dinner the Americans encountered the Englishman mounting the stairs with a hand on the arm of his servant, very distinguished in the faultless evening clothes of his kind—obviously the luggage from Brindisi had arrived—but still wearing, unaccountably, his heavy smoked traveling-glasses; and as they passed, they heard him say: "Return for me, Edwards, when people begin to leave the terrace, please, but not before the moon rises. And at the door of Madame

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Varády's salon, you may leave me. I shall be quite able to find my way about."

"Very good, sir. But suppose there are unexpected chairs or something of the sort in the way, sir?" The valet's voice sounded rather anxious.

"There won't be—I know the arrangements of that room by heart. Dammit, man, am I to be toddled in to her by the hand like a mewling infant?"

"No, sir. Certainly not, sir," murmured Edwards, rather gently.

Madame Nadya, they realized, was getting a reprieve.

During the several days before their departure, the Americans quite frequently encountered the elderly reunion going on, with apparent success, in various out-of-the-way corners of the island. Sir Ian Wyndham had commandeered for his requirements one of the large, antiquated touring-cars that are a souvenir of Corfu's more prosperous days, in which Madame Nadya managed to be always seated, waiting, whenever he came out for their daily drive. Once they saw her being lifted into it by her maid, rather hurriedly, just as Sir Ian appeared with Edwards at the hotel door; and catching the expression of his face, it seemed to them for a startled moment that perhaps he was not quite so blind as they had thought—so pitiful it was, so deeply moved. But the servant had to guide him to the car, and help him into it with unusual difficulty.

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Another time the Americans came upon the vehicle parked on the heights of the Kanoni, where the Baroness, with the aid of those exquisitely expressive hands which her progressive malady had not yet reached, was evidently giving her companion a word-picture of the much-photographed scene below—that little anchored ship of an islet, supposed to be the galley of Ulysses, petrified there in a lapis lazuli sea. They noted that the man's listening face followed the grace of the hands as if he saw them, the boyish happiness of his smile rather piteously at odds with the grizzled hair and haggard, distinguished features.

"I wish," muttered the younger of the Americans, thoughtfully, "that I could see him just once without those glasses, so that I'd be quite sure— But perhaps she's already told him, anyhow."

It was on the night before the Americans' departure, that the elder of them, fatigued by packing, retired rather earlier than usual to the bed on her side of the partition screens, which stood close to a window at the garden end, so that soft airs blew soothingly in upon her, laden with the scent, peculiar to that island season, of freesia bloom mingled with olive smoke. In the town beyond, young men's voices were chanting tirelessly those grave Greek folk-choruses which offer so strong a contrast to the gay Greek laughter. Much of the latter also drifted up to her from the terrace below, where people were still enjoying their belated dinners; while a gramophone, frugally substituted by the man-

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agement for the orchestral dinner accompaniment of more grandiose days, furnished appropriately sentimental music conveyed in the British idiom. It was a very tactful gramophone; new arrivals of any importance were invariably obliged at dinner with selections calculated to please the individual taste—*stornelli*, or perhaps light opera, for Italian patrons; Wagner for guests of an unmistakably Teutonic caste; while the rather rare advent of Americans brought forth quite a complete selection of last year's jazz and Broadway mammy-tunes. Herr Hoff had in such matters a nice discrimination. Tonight the gramophone offered nothing but the tenderest and most delicate of ballads, with sentiments irreproachably British.

Underlying these sounds, the lady became aware presently of a low duet of voices quite close at hand, and realized that the balcony of their former apartment, although a story lower, was just beneath the window near which she lay. The quiet English speech drifted with growing clarity into her drowsy consciousness.

"They were singing so, the young soldier men, the night we parted, Ian—those bold young heroes who did not yet know war! And the freesia, as now, was in full fragrance. You remember?"

The answer was inaudible; then came the woman's voice again, with a note of amusement in it. "But no, dear foolish one, it was *not* the perfume of my hair—that comes in a little bottle from the same place in Paris where they make my rouges and other *maquil-*

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*lage*. Freesia bloom is not bought, alas! in such little bottles; any more than the bloom of youth, *mon cher*. Ah, believe me, it is perhaps well that you are unable to see me now"—the lowered voice had lost its note of laughter—"or you would no longer be able to so adore the Nadya you remember."

"Should I not? That would seem very strange," he said. "You think if we had been able to grow old together, like any other contented Darby and Joan, that we should have ceased presently to love one another?"

She replied simply: "I think so, yes. They are somewhat *démodés*, your Darby and Joan, even in England, no? And we are dreamers born, we two. For such as we, the thing we lose is ever the thing we keep."

"I'm afraid I haven't your connoisseur's philosophy, Nadya. Is that the true reason," he asked, with a touch of bitterness, "that you would never come with me, never let me take you away for good?"

She answered quickly: "Ah, you know that it is not! How happy I would have been to take my chance, like other women. But for us two—could such a thing have been, as you say, 'for good'? You with your career to consider, I, my duty?"

"You mean your husband. What possible duty could you have owed a man who habitually neglected you for other women—who offered you no protection from the covetousness of whoever might be of use to himself—who ——"

"Who was nevertheless my husband," she finished,



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in quiet rebuke. "And even though he appeared so complaisant in many ways—too complaisant—do you think he would have publicly given me over to another? Are men like that? Eh, no, Wyndham, *mon cher*; I think that Varády would most probably have felt it his duty to kill you."

"Nonsense!" said the other.

"Ah, but in my country it is not nonsense!" she protested, earnestly. "Magyar gentlemen are very sensitive in point of honor, and Varády was expert enough at the *duello*, always. But even had he been so complaisant as to divorce me—*tiens*, I had still to remember, since you would not, your future."

"Damn my future!" the man exclaimed.

"Ah, but we did not damn it, *grâce à dieu*! At the time I dared not speak too much of this, knowing your reckless generosity and my own weakness. But now we may talk of everything together calmly, as two old friends, no? A young man of your position, Wyndham, handicapped by open scandal—by a wife you had taken—bought, if you will—from another man, citizen even of an alien country—how far do you think he would have arrived on the road of his ambition? For the English do not understand such *crises de nature* as we others understand. Therefore, instead of myself, I gave to you a career, my friend. All those decorations won for gallantry on the field of battle—would a happier man, with his woman waiting, have dared such deeds? Ah, no! those decorations of yours are also mine, *mon cher*!

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And when they elected you to the Parliament of your country, and when later I learned that you had been offered even a Cabinet post, though you refused—then how proudly do you think I said to myself, ‘So, *ma fille*, behold your reward!’ And it sufficed. . . . You see how closely I have kept always at your side, although unknown to you.”

He said after a moment, his voice a little unsteady: “But why unknown, my dear? Why could you not at least have written to me, once the war was over?”

“And why not you to me?” she countered—then added, in quick contrition: “Ah, but forgive me. I understand better now; our letters could not have been for the intruding eyes of others. The journals which told me so much did not tell that your war injuries had permanently impaired the sight. If I had known that—ah, Ian, if you had told me that, there would have been no need for letters. I would have gone to you at once, anywhere!”

“Of course you would,” he muttered. “And do you think I could have let you give out of pity what you had denied for love?”

A little silence fell between them. Then she said, rather strangely: “How you are right, Ian! Such love as we have known, so fine, and proud, and beautiful, must not be marred by any lesser strain of pity. Never. And so, to abide by our agreement has been in the end best, no? A clean break, even as we promised; no after-

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lingering; I to return wholly to my woman's duty, you to your man's work in the world. *Va bene!*"

He said, after a while: "You took the agreement rather literally, Nadya. Was it necessary for you to go back to your 'duty' quite so promptly?"

"But it was not very promptly, my dear. My husband was already with his regiment in the field, as you know; and when I managed to get back into Hungary I immediately volunteered for hospital work on the Serbian front. We did not meet, in fact, until several years later. Then—it seemed better so. He had need of me, Ian. He had still a husband's claim on me."

The other gave a muffled exclamation. "What possible claim that the rotter had not forfeited long since?"

"The claim, for one, of gratitude," she answered, soberly. "Remember, he was by birth a great Magyar gentleman, I a daughter of the people."

"You were also a very great and successful artist, and one of the most adored in Europe!"

"Ah, but which of these other adoring gentlemen"—her tone held a note of scornful pride—"would have cared to marry me? Only you, who came too late. Besides, in some ways Varády was very kind."

"Kind!"

"But yes—to me as to his dogs, his horses, always. If, for example, one suffered sometimes—as so many do with increasing years," she added, hurriedly—"he was most patient, his hands were not ungentle. And there was also," she went on in a steadier tone, "the

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claim of pity, Ian. Varády aged greatly during the war; misfortune was not becoming to him. And when a man's mistresses begin to fail him, it is so terrible for his pride. Is that the time for his wife also to fail him? Ah no. My husband, do you see, had become very poor. He had lost quite everything."

"Including much of your own property, I dare say?"

She said, evasively: "Hungary itself has lost everything, Ian. All of us are now poor people."

"You mean *really* poor?" he demanded, with an odd insistence. "You have not had to give up your servants—your motor-car—your frocks from Paris—your pretty jewels——?"

She laughed a careless reassurance. "Naturally, one does not deny oneself the necessities! If one had become really poor," she added, lightly, "one had but to take up the dancing again. They do not forget me yet in Paris, I think, or in Warsaw, or in Vienna!"

"Rather not," he said, with emphasis. "They will never forget you, Nadya! Who could? I have so often wondered about it—your career. Why did you give it up? During the war, of course, there was no heart for dancing, even your dancing; but afterwards—I confess that I have not gone to Paris for years without hoping, without secretly expecting, to find your name again on the hoardings. Why did you give up your career?"

Here the unseen audience, absorbed in her shameless eavesdropping as in the pages of a forbidden book, gave a start of dismay. "Then he *doesn't* know!" she

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thought. "And now the poor dear will have to tell ——"

The woman's voice was explaining, obviously with a smile, that she had found it wise to yield as gracefully as might be to the approaching infirmities of age—camp-hospital tents were often damp, a recurrent touch of rheumatism—one would hardly care to go hobbling about the scene of former triumphs in the rôle of a witch of Endor!

"Age! You?" the man laughed his incredulity. "The terms are incompatible. One would as easily fancy a butterfly hobbling, a rheumatic water-sprite. I can still see you as I saw you first, in the 'Scheherezade'—a drifting silver wraith out of some dream of an Oriental Paradise. It was enough to turn any Christian into a True Believer! That is one of the pictures I have been able to keep with me, even in the dark, Nadya. Don't try to spoil it for me."

"Ah, my dear, always at heart a poet, a child, a worshiper of beauty."

"Of your beauty, yes. You are everything I mean by beauty, ageless as Spring, as youth itself." He stopped abruptly. "But of course you were only joking when you spoke like that? If I could see, I should make you dance for me now, at once, to prove it!"

"And if you could see, how I should be able to dance for you!—Scheherezade, water-sprite, butterfly, anything." Her voice was exquisite with tenderness. "I was only joking, yes, only joking, of course. Keep the

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picture you have taken with you into the darkness, Ian. Nothing shall spoil it for you. To speak truth," she said, with reassuring impartiality, "one is in some ways perhaps more *en beauté* than formerly; what is lost of youthful allure redeems itself in subtlety of expression, in nuance. And the hair, while less abundant, is of a tint far more *chic*. Ah, but listen! Think that I am dancing for you the waltz that is playing now, the lovely cool English waltz ——"

Below, the distant soldier chorus had ceased, and the chatter at the tables was diminishing, so that there came to them very sweetly, from the Herr Direktor's gramophone, a disembodied soprano singing:

"I'll see you again

Whenever Spring breaks through again . . ."

The man on the balcony pushed back his chair so abruptly that there was a yelp of alarm from the slumbering guardian beneath it. "Come then!" he dared, recklessly. "With you to guide me, I'd attempt anything!"

There was fright in her laughing protest. "At our years? Absurd! We should do better with the Sibelius *Valse Triste*! No, no, my dear, one is out of practice, the balcony is too narrow. Another time—yes, yes, I promise."

"That," the alarmed listener above informed herself, "was a close call, my good woman! What a perfect idiot the man is—or is he?"

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"Down there they are dancing for us, see?" The Baroness was obviously regarding some lingering diners on the terrace below. "It is a pretty little Levantine girl with her Greek lover, a tall, blond, serious boy, such as you were when first you loved me, Ian. Almost it might be your son dancing there. Ah, if it were!—It has been a sorrow to you, no, that you have not sons?" she went on, after a quiet moment. "To me also, Ian. Always, in my long following of your career, I have hoped to hear at last of your suitable marriage."

He said, incredulously: "You would have liked me to marry and forget you?"

"How should mere marriage cause you to forget? I do not speak of another love-affair! Ah, but pardon, sometimes it is difficult for me now to think in English. So, it has been because of me that you have denied yourself the heart's desire of every man for sons? This is what I have most feared; it is for this that I cannot forgive myself. Your loneliness ——"

He said, stoutly: "My people don't give me much chance to get really lonely, you know. My sister's children are nice young beggars, always about. Two girls, and the boy who is to be my heir."

"Ah, but a nephew, nieces—those are not sons! Women manage to make home for themselves out of so very little, a window with flowers growing, some faithful tyrant of a maid, a small fat dog like my precious Gogo—sweet, is he not?"

"He is not," replied the other, with candid distaste.

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"You must let me get you a decent Aberdeen, or spaniel. But to see a woman like you—you, Nadya!—lavishing her tenderness on a lapdog, like any ——"

"Any thwarted old foolish spinster, you would say, or outworn courtesan? Ah, but dogs are most consoling to a woman who is alone, *mon cher*; they enjoy so much to eat—like little men; if one wakes in the night, afraid, to hear them snoring in the bassinet gives reassurance. A man has such other needs, such other requirements. Ah, Ian, my dear one, why did you never find some fair, tall English bride for yourself, as I begged of you when we parted?"

"Because," he said, his voice shaking suddenly with the long restraint he had put upon himself, "I have been waiting ever since for this day, this hour! I knew that you would not fail in your promise to meet me here; I knew that even if you were not free to come, you would come. And you *are* free, thank God!—we are both free. There is nothing now to keep us apart longer— No, no, do not speak yet. I know everything, I understand—only, I hoped that you might trust me enough to tell. You have not deceived me."

"Not—deceived you?" she faltered. "In—in what way?"

"About your poverty, for one thing. Did you think I would not hear about that? Did you think I would not have made it my business to hear? Keeping my hands off, all these years—believe me, it has not been easy! But I knew that insane Magyar pride of yours, you



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who would never accept from me so much as a modest jewel, a few pearls ——”

She interrupted, ruefully: “It was that I had already accepted too many of such things, Ian, from men who meant nothing to me.”

“Yes.” He brushed aside this confession as of no consequence. “And I should not have dared even now to ask anything of you, so long as it was I who needed you, who might be in any way a burden upon you. But, blind or not, it is you who have need of me—not only material need. I know this, I feel it! You must let me take care of you at last, my darling. Come and make all beauty real for me; not only a thing dreamed, a thing remembered. Your mistaken ‘duty’, my empty ‘career’—these have been fulfilled, accomplished. My people know that I have come to you, and why; they are content. But surely, at our time of life, we may do as we will with the rest of it without any fear of criticism!”

“No, no, do not ask—I must not.” She sounded a little breathless, as if fighting for time. “It is no fear of criticism that could stop me now, only ——”

“Only what, then?” he cried, in triumph.

Her answer came tonelessly, after a long interval. “Ian, my dear, you ask too much. I am old, older in spirit than in years, older than a man ever becomes, I think. You must leave me in peace. You ask me to make beauty real for you. How is that possible when it is no longer a reality for me? A shadow among

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other shadows; like sorrow, like joy, like all emotion ——”

“Are you trying to tell me,” he asked, bewildered, “that you no longer love me, Nadya? That you have ceased to care for me?”

“But, my friend, long ago,” was the gentle response. “You, or anything—except one’s creature comforts, perhaps, one’s little habitudes. Do not ask me to alter these! Women become like that when they are spent. And this ‘love’ you still speak about, boy that you are!—it seems to me now the most shadowy of all the shadows, an outworn sentiment, a souvenir. Yet a souvenir so precious”—the voice trembled a little—“that I cannot let you take it from me entirely, Ian; or from yourself. Did I not say to you that for such as you and I, the thing we lose is ever the thing we keep?”

“I don’t believe you!” he burst out, angrily. “You’re lying to me, Nadya! If you no longer cared for me, why did you trouble to keep our appointed tryst? You must have had some reason for coming to this cruel rendezvous.”

“Ah yes, one had one’s reasons—” It was from the poignant quality of the voice, rather than its calm deliberation, that the listener above knew that the crux of the woman’s sacrificial endeavor was upon her. “Yes, I have lied to you, of course. I am no longer beautiful, and I am poor, poorer than you could conceive—so poor that I have nothing left of that ‘insane Magyar

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pride' which is usual to us, even to those of us who are of humble birth. That is why I kept our promised tryst, do you see—to ask for help of you. Because I have loved you once so tenderly, and you me, I have no shame of this. Since you are rich, and it troubles you to think that I lack, you may give me what you will, Ian—yes, money, anything—enough to enable me to keep awhile longer the servant who must look after me, the window full of flowers, the companionship of some little dog. This much I shall accept from you, gladly. Does it please you?"

The answer came at last, brokenly, barely audible: "As you will, Nadya. Thanks."

Here the distressed audience had the somewhat tardy grace to rise hurriedly from her bed and very quietly to close her window. But even so, through the growing stillness of the night the persistent tones of the gramophone came up to her, uttering a wistful little autumn melody which has haunted her memory since, together with the poignant fragrances of an Attic spring. The words of it remain less clearly; there was a verse—

When shadows fall, I wander through the gardens among the flowers  
and grass,

I linger on the beauty all around me; then two lovers pass . . .

and somewhere near the end, one line:

I hear him murmur, "*Ah, je t'aime!*" As she answers low, "*Cher ami*" . . .



# CORFIOT IDYLL







V

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It is difficult at times to explain why the casual traveler wishes to linger in one place rather than another, and thinks of it often afterwards, and must soon or late return to it, if only for a passing hour. In the matter of Corfu, the island's lure for us had undoubtedly to do with an unfinished story told us there by a person called George Lucas, who first introduced to us its ancient and secret charm.

We had fancied at first that this man, one of those intelligent, persistent polyglots of undetermined origin who lie in wait for their prey at every port of the Levant, might be, because of the familiar sound of the name, and his clipped English speech, and his civil

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but never obsequious manner, a British native of Malta, which supplies traditionally the most dependable service to be found in that vicinity—until he happened to write his address in my notebook. "Jorg Lukas" was obviously not so English as it sounded; nor was there anything in the least English about the hint of smoldering fire that underlay his laconic utterances whenever they touched upon some subject that interested himself, as, for example, Ethana Callender.

It was through Lukas that we had our one and only encounter with the girl, and learned what there was to learn of her history. The man, in his self-appointed rôle of guide, philosopher, and friend, had taken us out to a certain place along the shore where lobsters of a peculiar succulence were to be selected, still in their native habitat, tethered to a rock in the tragic illusion of freedom, and boiled upon the spot, and eaten from the shell, together with very strong goat's-milk butter and very salt black olives and a vintage of the place which was less like wine than sweet new cider. As a matter of fact, the combination proved so lingering that we thought best, in the interests of digestion, to take a vigorous stroll afterwards along the beach—a lovely indented coastline whose shallows made patches of clearest jade in a purple water, and whose sudden jutting promontories divided the curve of sand into little individual bathing-chambers, invitingly private and secluded. It was in one of these that we came upon a young sea-nymph, or possibly one of the more domes-



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tic nereids who haunt Greek fountains, at play with an infant faun. She had just come up out of her native element, such scant garment as she wore molding in close relief the lissome curve of breast and hip and thigh; but her hair, whose bronze patina had no glint of gold or copper, was rolled high and smoothly about her head in the sort of double aureole affected by Corfu peasant matrons, and known to them as the *malia*. Evidently this was a respectably married naiad. The faun was very small and very dark, and quite unclad except for an absurd little crimson breech-clout about his loins. He was leaping in pursuit of an enormous ball she had just thrown for him, one of those gaily striped pneumatic affairs to be found nowadays upon all proper bathing-beaches. No sound came from this picture except the child's shrill laugh, which might as easily have been the cry of some passing sea-bird.

As we stood at gaze, it came to us that this was no mere ordinary water-nymph before us, but the maid Nausicaa, royal daughter of the Phæacians, still here at play with her ball through the centuries, on the very shore where first Ulysses saw her; and, having lingered perhaps unduly—who could blame him?—continued with reluctance his homeward journey to the patiently waiting Penelope. So that Father Neptune, in righteous disapproval of such philandering on the part of a married hero, transformed the offending pinnace which had borne him thither into a thing of rock and earth which stands to this day in those storied waters, mute testi-

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mony to the much-maligned domestic standards of Olympus. Homer's tale of it came to my memory:

And lo! The ship sea-faring nigh to land  
Came lightly furrowing the blue waves; but he  
Rose in his wrath, and with down-striking hand  
Made her a stone, and in the nether sea  
Clenched the dead keel with roots. . . .

If this were a fair sample, I thought, of the famous Phæacian beauty, other passers-by than Ulysses had no doubt lingered unduly at Corfu on their way elsewhere.

Then the girl, warned perhaps by the protective instinct of all dwellers in secret places, turned suddenly and saw us gazing. It was such a face as Praxiteles might have sculptured, lovelier even than the body—delicate folded lips of ripest pomegranate, chiseled nose and forehead making the pure classic line, broad low brows shadowing eyes deep and gray and curiously poignant, in which, as they met ours, sudden terror stirred.

I said, on an impulse of reassurance, first in English and then in French: "Don't be disturbed! We're only two women, quite alone. Can you tell us, please, if there is a spring of drinking-water near?"

Apparently she understood neither language. In silent panic she ran to the child, caught him up on her hip, and sped with ever-increasing fleetness up through the slope of a grassy glade until she disappeared, without so much as a backward glance, into a lush tangle of growth that inclosed what seemed to be a private

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garden. We caught glimpses within it of a low-columned Greek villa of pinkish plaster, over which clambered a flowering wistaria vine.

"Well!" said my companion, dismayed. "If it weren't for this anachronistic water-ball they've left behind them, I'd think the whole thing an apparition. Did you ever see any human creature run so beautifully? What do you suppose we did to produce an effect like that?"

"Never mind," I said. "Jorg Lukas will know!" So far we had found his flow of laconic information quite infallible. Nor did it fail us now. The girl we had seen was, he told us without surprise, a peeress of England, wife to the famous scholar and archæologist, Lord Callender, who kept a winter residence in the neighborhood.

"That girl English? Never!" I said. "Nor yet Scottish, nor even Irish. Besides, she wears her hair in the peasant *malia*, Lukas! And the only Lord Callender I know about, the one connected with the recent discoveries in the city underlying Athens, is certainly old enough to be her grandfather."

"Quite, madam," said our guide. "And his lady is, as madam suggests, peasant born, the daughter of his housekeeper. She did not speak to you because she is a mute."

"A mute!" we cried, in unison. "Do you mean to say that perfectly lovely creature was born deaf and dumb?"

"Deaf, no, madam. It is said that she possesses a

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hearing even more acute than ordinary. Nor was she always without speech. As a child, she has been heard often to speak; even, it is said, to sing, if none were near. But of late years, no." The muteness, he added, had come upon her soon after she reached maturity.

The girl's mother, he explained, under compulsion of our obvious curiosity, was a respectable woman of Corfu, widow of a man who had aided Lord Callender in all his earlier archæological investigations; so that when he died the Englishman had most kindly taken the woman into his employ, despite the fact that she was hampered by a young child. He had even educated the child, who was very quick to learn, and had given her the name Ethana, which means, in one of the Greek dialects, "Intelligence." But the father had not been Corfiot; he came from the mainland yonder—Lukas nodded toward the misty opposite headlands of Epirus.

"You mean that he was a Greek of higher class than the mother? A scholar himself, perhaps?" I asked, recalling the girl's quite aristocratic delicacy of limb and feature.

Lukas replied that the man was hardly a scholar, having received no education, but that he was very skillful with a pick, which is important in archæology, and very trustworthy. "Also, madam, inhabitants of Epirus are not necessarily Greek," he politely corrected my ethnology, "although the Greeks like to claim the more famous of them. As, for example, the sage Aris-

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totle; and Alexander, who is known to his people as Lec i Madhe."

"Do you mean to tell us," I exclaimed, "that Alexander the Great and Aristotle were not Greek?"

"Yes, madam. They were born Albanian, a race who inhabited those hills when the Greeks were still barbarians." There was a vibration in his voice of unmistakable pride.

I recalled a story I had heard of certain inhabitants of Epirus who, when their village had been taken by some enemy, obtained permission to dance in the summer evening, as was their wont, upon the sea-cliffs; and one by one, as they circled there, managed to drop over the precipice to be dashed to pieces in the surf below, before the conquerors realized how their prisoners were escaping. This violent type of patriotism had not, somehow, the temperate Greek sound.

My companion remarked with sudden conviction, "You're no Levantine, Lukas! You're a man of Epirus yourself."

"No, miss," he replied, "I am a Shoshi man. But it is all the same, every Albanian is like another; as every American, no?"

"No," said my friend, succinctly. "We're a mixed breed, Lukas. But your culture," she pursued, in some curiosity, "is really an older one than the Greek? Yet most of us think of Albania as a land of picturesque and rather operatic robbers."

On the contrary, Lukas assured us, Albanians were

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invariably quite honest and reliable persons. "True, merely to kill, or to take away the goods of some stranger, is not regarded as a crime too serious—I speak now of our more ignorant folk, my ladies, who have not had the advantages of your civilization," he added, politely. "But to cheat any man, or to break a *besa*—which is an oath—or to harm any woman, these things are punishable by death; even in the case of a stranger who is an enemy. Many persons who wish to escape the laws of their own country come to ours," he added, "knowing that there they will be quite secure."

"You mean that your people would not give up one who came to them for refuge, no matter what crime he might have committed?"

"Not," said our guide, "if he came in friendship, without weapons. It is not our place to judge the sins of another man; that is for his priest, no? Nor would my people take money from such a one, so long as he remained beneath an Albanian roof; nor yet for an hour after he had left it for the open road; nor even then so long as there might be women with him. But after that—*ey yah*, it would then be well for him to watch out for Sadiri!" His little grin was eloquent.

"And who," inquired my companion, "is Sadiri?"

"He is said to be the leader of some band of brigands, miss; I do not know if this is true," remarked our guide, impartially; and resumed his story. "It is because Albanians are known to be so reliable that Lord

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Callender was willing to keep the girl on after her mother died, as his housekeeper, young though she was, knowing that she came of a people more to be trusted than Corfiots, who are only Greeks. Also, she was silent about the house, and kept it cleanly, and watched with care the spending of his moneys, and cooked the things he liked to eat in the English fashion—all this she had learned from the Corfiote mother, although not one who belonged by nature to the life of houses," he explained, with a touch of native phraseology that sometimes crept rather quaintly into his English speech. It was from the father, however, that she had in childhood her love of going out with the fishing-boats in any weather, of being in and out of the water all day long, and running alone in the spring woods, and climbing up to the highest cliffs, especially if a wind from the south, the *Jugo*, were blowing in. Then it was, he said, that persons passing below heard an unseen singing, so thin and clear and unearthly that many crossed themselves, believing it to be the singing of an ora.

"What," demanded my companion, promptly, "is an ora?"

Our guide looked rather shamefaced. It was really nothing, he said; merely one of the disembodied voices heard occasionally from the tops of tall trees, or in high mountain places.

My companion and I exchanged glances. "The 'oread' of mythology?" I questioned, *sotto voce*.

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Only the more ignorant people heard them now, of course, Lukas added, deprecatingly; not educated persons like himself and ourselves. It was because, he continued, the girl had never amused herself quite like other children, but read much in books, and kept herself apart from the village folk as became one of the household of a distinguished gentleman of learning, that the impression spread abroad that she was not like normal children, but had become *gogoli*—a word which meant, we gathered, either “crazy” or “bewitched.” And as it was well known, he said, that people who were *gogoli* could also bewitch others, the neighbors were careful to avoid Ethana. Indeed, after she took on her mother’s duties as housekeeper, the girl had no longer leisure even for her own odd amusements. So presently there was more talk; the sort of talk, said Lukas stolidly, that often happens when a maiden comes to her maturity too young.

Ethana began to be extremely beautiful. That also, he conceded, she had from the Corfiote mother, together with her skill at housewifery. The women of Gasturi especially were famous for it, so that often, in more lawless days, men from the mainland had raided the island to take for themselves Gasturi wives. This new talk of Ethana soon spread throughout the villages, and the town, and even across the water, so that on market day many strange youths were to be encountered there with nothing at all to sell, merely eyes to stare. So it was, he said, when some rare plant flowered



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in a wood, and bees in far distant fields had rumor of it, and left their clover to come gathering. Not that the bees had much good of Ethana, however; there was always something untamed about the girl, for all her learning and her gentleness, shy as a wild creature is shy; and to find whenever she went into public places young men standing to gaze and silently desire was frightening to her. "Our women," explained Lukas, "are often so, not as the shameless Greek women, who court pursuit." However, the more startled the girl was, the more beautiful—"But you have seen for yourselves, my ladies."

We had. We had also seen for ourselves, quite early in his narrative, that our swart, laconic, middle-aged guide had been, and no doubt still was, one of those who stared and silently desired.

"Are you married?" my companion asked, irrelevantly, sharing my passing thought.

"No, miss." He added as if in explanation, "It is the usual custom for Albanians to marry in their own tribe, but our Shoshi women are very ignorant persons, miss." Poor over-civilized Lukas!

At last the curate of the English church at Corfu, it appeared, an old acquaintance of Lord Callender, had warned the gentleman that it was no longer quite suitable for a girl so conspicuous, at the age when a Corfu mother ties a ribbon to the window shutter to show that there is a marriageable daughter ready, to be living alone, except for his lordship's personal servant, in

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the house of a bachelor, no matter how elderly and distinguished. At first the scholar blinked in astonishment, too long accustomed, perhaps, to the girl's presence to notice any change in it; then he was greatly annoyed that neighbors had dared to comment on his private affairs; then he said, impatiently, that he was willing to marry the girl to prove her chastity, but that he declined to have any strange female brought into the house to disturb his habits. The English priest told him angrily not to talk nonsense, that a man of his position could not possibly marry his native housekeeper.

"Ha!" said Lord Callender, who, although so absent in his ways, was not one to be crossed easily. "I will show you that a man of my position can do exactly as he damn well pleases!" So he married Ethana, and she was content.

"Content!" I exclaimed.

"Why not? It was a fine marriage for her. His lordship was rich and always kind, after the manner of a father who is too preoccupied to notice his family but wishes well to it. Also," said Lukas, stolidly, but with that odd little smoldering of the eyes which occasionally belied his stolidity, "what did the girl know of anything that lacked? She who had never gone on a Sunday to dance in the village *foro*, nor slept out under the moon at olive-picking season with all the other youths and maidens, and the old women to keep guard? To such as her, who feared the natural warmth in all men's eyes, and had no mother to tell her why, the pro-

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tection of a husband who was already old seemed, no doubt, safe refuge." So Lord Callender gave fine marriage presents to all her mother's envious relations, and continued to wish well to Ethana; and the girl undid her hair from the braids of maidenhood and twisted it proudly into a *malia*, and went about the fine villa that was now her villa with the absorbed and happy gravity of a child who plays house. She began also, in the first month, to embroider dresses for a baby, he said. But there was not to be for a long time any baby.

"How old was she then?" asked my companion, pityingly.

"Perhaps fifteen."

"And the man well over sixty," I muttered. "Lord Callender ought to have been tarred and feathered for it! How did he dare?"

Lukas explained in his impassive way that the age was legal in Greece, and that no doubt his lordship had believed the girl older than she was because of her intelligence and her sudden, tall maturity.

"And how soon did the old wretch begin to realize the enormity of what he had done?" demanded my friend, quite viciously.

Lukas hesitated. "The enormity, I think, never. Merely the fact." Nor was his lordship at all a villain, he added, reprovably, only a man like other men, grown old; one came in the end even to pity him because of this.

"You mean—?" We waited.

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It is often through the eyes of others, our guide rather sententiously remarked, that one comes to realize the worth of a possession. While the native youths no longer dared to follow and stare at the lady wife of so distinguished a foreigner, there were others who felt no such scruple; the English, he commented, were peculiar in such ways. Lord Callender, who had for many years lived the life of a scholarly hermit there in his remote villa, made so comfortable by the ministrations of Ethana, and her mother before her, that he postponed from season to season his return to England, found suddenly that he had more friends than he suspected—Anglo-Greek gentlemen from the town; fellow-scholars who came to pay their respects in passing; travelers who had brought letters to him, many painters and sculptors among them—all of these, as the loveliness of the young Greek wife grew more and more renowned, arrived in increasing numbers at the villa and lingered there; so that presently his lordship himself became aware of his wife's attractions. He no longer absorbed himself entirely in scholarly research, nor left the island, as formerly, for long archæological expeditions to the mainland. Nor was the girl permitted any more to go about the place in her simple peasant dress, bare armed and frequently barefooted, but must array herself for his pleasure in fine fabrics bought from the shops, ordered even from Paris—silks, laces, high-heeled slippers, stockings of gossamer. The man became completely obsessed with her, as old hus-

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bands will, developing an almost senile infatuation rather painful to contemplate; could not allow her out of his sight, never tiring of exhibiting her beauty to his guests, encouraging them to paint and model and photograph her in every possible pose, even with unbound hair—"Which is to our women," explained Lukas, soberly, "a more shocking thing than to expose the body, since the body is not, like the hair, given for mere purposes of allurements."

The girl, knowing her wifely duty, offered no protest, showed herself always gentle, docile, even affectionate to the aging man who was her benefactor; only, she began to lose something of her rose-gold duskiness of skin, and the great eyes took on a bewildered poignancy which artists must have found very paintable. The portrait of her which I have since seen in the Wallace Collection has the look of a hunted doe. Also, it was at this time that she was heard less and less often to speak, and never any more to sing. But when a woman is as beautiful as that, said Lukas, speech is rarely required of her.

"Poor Nausicaa! It was high time for another Ulysses to appear and create a rescue," I murmured.

"Ulysses nothing!" replied my friend, with scorn. "She'd had quite enough, if you ask me, of elderly attentions! What she needed was some dashing young desperado of a Perseus."

We saw from the brief glint in his eye that our educated guide had caught and appreciated the classical

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reference; but he made no comment, merely went on presently at our request with his story.

At last, it seemed, the doting husband had become persuaded, perhaps by not too disinterested friends, that to keep such a treasure hidden away on a forgotten island was a crime against society, that it was no less than his duty to take this rarest of his Greek discoveries back to his own world, so that all might see and envy. Ethana acquiesced, of course, without objection; grateful, indeed, that her husband so wished to honor her.

But the English visit was not a success. In the chill, bleak fogs of the Atlantic island, this daughter of a more southerly sea and sun and sky thrived badly. Crowds had always dismayed her, even such modest crowds as came to a Corfu market day; and in London she was never alone. The young Greek beauty, with her tall bronze coronal of hair, and the grave simplicity that is a property alike of peasants and great princes, had created quite a furore in that jaded metropolitan society, and people were assiduously kind to her; even the relatives of Lord Callender, who were doubtless not overpleased with the old scholar's belated marriage. Women petted her, men made love to her; and Ethana accepted their attentions with gentle dignity, as part of the life her husband had chosen for her. But there was none to realize the nostalgia underlying her stoic composure, the desperate, sick loneliness; none even to whom she might speak sometimes in

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her familiar tongue—excepting only Lord Callender's confidential manservant, who, although not a Corfiot, had accompanied the archæologist on so many of his expeditions that he was at home in all the dialects of Greece. She began visibly to droop and fade; even when they took her out into the fair English countryside, deceptively green under a sun that had no power to warm the heart. It was the manservant who at last found courage to warn his master that he must take his lady back to her own country if he wished to save her life, and several doctors who had been called in agreed with him; so that Lord Callender, in remorseful haste, bade the servant make immediate arrangements for the return journey.

It was then late summer, not a season when steamers stop regularly at Corfu; so that the servant was obliged to take ship as best he could from Venice to an Albanian port, Valona, whence he arranged that an automobile should carry them down through the mountain passes to a village where fishing-boats might convey them to the opposite Corfu shore. An automobile, Lukas explained to us rather meticulously, was necessary because in that most ancient of the Balkan lands there is as yet no railroad, and one may travel there only by the odd anachronisms of motor-car and airplane. Also, as the servant duly warned his master, one traveled there at one's own risk, because of *heidoucs*.

"*Heidoucs*?" explained my companion, alertly.

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"That means brigands, doesn't it? So there really are brigands, then, in your super-trustworthy Albania?"

There would always be brigands, commented our guide, in a world where some men have become too rich, and others too poor, and no justice is done between them—in Albania, he added evenly, as in America.

"*Touché!*" murmured my friend, grinning.

But Lord Callender, it appeared, had scorned the idea of *heidoucs*—the English, whatever their faults, being not of a nervous habit; and when, at a certain pass in the inner ranges, bandits had indeed descended upon them, the old scholar was able to give such a surprisingly vigorous account of himself with cane and fists that the chief of the brigands, who happened to be the great Sadiri himself, had afterwards congratulated him upon his prowess. And beside her husband the Lady Ethana, she who had wasted away into a pale shadow of herself, and was so timid that if men looked at her she wished to hide, fought also like a tigress with young, crying out again and again: "Think shame! Do you not dare to harm this old man who is under a woman's protection! Do you not dare!"—which was the last time, added Lukas, that her voice had been heard by any man, in either speech or song.

There was something very moving to me in the thought of the piteous young creature trying to protect, mother-fashion, the benefactor who had so betrayed her youth. Then my friend leaned suddenly forward. "And



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how does it happen, Jorg Lukas, that you are able to describe the scene?"

He said, impassively: "It was so reported by the driver of the automobile, who had managed to hide himself early in the attack."

"Clever of him. Go on—what happened next?"

He gave his brief little sketch of a shrug. "What could happen, miss? His lordship, with only the lady and his servant to help, was no match for the *heidouc* Sadiri, fiercest fighter in all the Shoshi tribe; so ——"

"Ah! Then Sadiri is also a Shoshi man?" interrupted my friend, whose memory is long.

"So it is said; only"—his smile was deprecating—"all Shoshi men are not *heidoucs*, miss; many such as myself prefer the ways of civilization. . . . They soon overcame his lordship, without hurting him, and tied him and the manservant to trees, and went away up the mountain, carrying the woman with them, still clawing and struggling like a tiger cat, although no longer crying out. And presently the driver of the car found courage to come from his hiding-place and cut loose their bonds, and they got into the automobile, and drove to the nearest place for help. But it was many weeks before Lord Callender got his lady back again."

"I should have thought," I exclaimed, "that with the sort of diplomatic pressure Lord Callender could bring to bear, the Greek government would have taken a hand at once!"

The man's faint smile convicted me of foolishness.

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Diplomatic pressure, he explained, would have had little effect upon Sadiri, surrounded by his own people, safe in his mountain fastnesses in the depths of the Albanian hinterland. This the Englishman knew well enough, and would permit no interference on the part of any government, Greek or British. Instead, he found a way to send word privately to Sadiri that he was willing to pay any price required, in any fashion, for the safe immediate return of his young wife. . . . But it was not money Sadiri wanted. He had seen the girl before; no doubt with the fishing-boats, or perhaps as a child playing along the shore.

"And how," questioned my companion, thoughtfully, "did he happen to know, do you suppose, just when she would be passing, comparatively unprotected, through his own country?"

"Ah, how indeed?" shrugged Lukas. The *heidoucs* seemed, he added, to have always reliable sources of information about anything which interested them.

Lord Callender, despite his distress, was never greatly concerned for the actual safety of his lady, knowing that the mountain men would not harm a woman, nor long detain her against her will; and so at early dawn one day some fishermen preparing their nets in the bay near the Englishman's villa were not too surprised when one of the shallow sailing-boats from the mainland opposite came rapidly in among them, and landed a woman at the harbor pier without dropping sail. She was not, judging from the dress, a

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Corfu woman, nor yet a European, but, an Albanian *zouschka*, attired very handsomely in full ceremonial costume of striped silk skirt, wide silver-studded marriage belt, and jacket covered with fringes and golden chains; and at first they did not recognize her for Lord Callender's missing lady, so changed she was from the pale and listless creature they had come almost to pity of late years. Now she was dusky with sun again, and more beautiful in her tall, deep-bosomed young matronhood than she had ever been. But when any asked if harm had come to her among the brigands, she shook her head and did not speak. Nor had she spoken since.

"The nervous shock of such an experience probably," I hazarded, "or was it the final misery of that time in England?"

"Or was it, perhaps," contributed my sapient companion, "that there may have been things she very much preferred not to have to answer questions about? What do you think, Lukas?"

The man made his noncommittal little gesture of the shoulder. Despite her muteness, he said, the girl had at least become more tranquil, less like some helpless woods creature that had been trapped. She seemed quite glad to be again among familiar places, and her health was entirely restored—so much so that Lord Callender, toward the end of the winter season, found himself at last the father of a son.

Thinking of the brown, merry, un-English little

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faun we had seen sporting along the shore, we made no comment.

His lordship's pride in the child was naturally very great, went on Lukas, impassively; nevertheless, when he had later found it necessary to return to England in the interest of his affairs, he had not taken his family with him, realizing, no doubt, that the Corfu climate was safer for both; and in England he had himself suffered a recent illness, from which he was reported to be slowly dying.

"Good!" said my friend, unfeelingly. "About the least he could do for her, in the circumstances. . . . But why is she still so timid, then, running away from us like that, as if we were a public menace? Do you suppose she mistook us for more *heidoucs*?"

It was not of *heidoucs* the lady need have fear, replied Jorg Lukas, nor of her husband; his lordship, knowing her passionate devotion to the child, intended, no doubt, to leave him with her as long as possible, being a man of kindly nature. But when he should die—"A young peer of England must be educated after the English fashion, no? Not left to the care of an ignorant peasant mother; Lord Callender's family would certainly see to that. At any moment now they may come to take the child from her."

No wonder the unheralded appearance of two strange English-speaking women had sent the mother into panic. "Take him away from her?" I exclaimed. "Oh, but they couldn't! Why, the child is the only com-

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pensation she's managed to get out of the whole miserable business!"

"What a pity," my friend said, slowly, "that word can't be sent somehow to those enterprising *heidoucs*, so that they might seize the occasion to abduct her again, child and all!"

For a fleeting moment the white teeth gleamed under our guide's mustaches; he was not a man who smiled often. "It is also a pity," he murmured, with a polite little bow in her direction, "that the American miss was not herself born in the Shoshi country. There was once, in our history, a lady *heidouc* who became a chieftain."

Some days later we happened, still under his direction, to be doing our final bout of shopping along the arcades of Corfu's main thoroughfare when we passed an odd-looking pair of men, both unusually tall, who were obviously not native to our gentle, long-civilized, quasi-European Corfu. One, all in black and bearded to his fierce black eyes, wore trousers tight-fitting below the knee and very baggy above, a short Skanderbeg jacket elaborately braided, and a peaked astrakhan fez that was a sort of extension of his jet-black, vigorously curling hair. The other, moving close at his elbow, was arrayed even more spectacularly, in crimson trousers and a long sleeveless paletot of white felt, or skin, embroidered in all colors of the rainbow. Their sandals of braided thongs were decorated with silk pompons on the turned-up toes; both wore sashes bristling with

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weapons, knotted about very lithe and slender waists; and despite the theatrical effect of their costuming, I have never seen a pair of men more utterly, haughtily, magnificently virile, stalking along the cobblestones like two lords of creation viewing their domain, ourselves included, with careless scorn.

We heard our guide, behind us, exchange the usual brief greeting with them; in Greece strangers do not pass without notice, as in our mannerless West. "What did you say that time, Lukas?" inquired my friend, with her ever-candid curiosity. "It sounded too deep and musical for any Greek I know."

"I said to them, '*Tu ng-jat jeta*—To you long life'; and they answered me, '*Per te mire*—All good to you.' We did not speak in the Greek, miss, but in one of the dialects of my people."

"In Albanian? What brings them over here, I wonder?"

He shrugged. "No doubt they come to sell one thing or another, in the market. Albanians are good traders."

My friend continued, pursuing a train of thought which had latterly taken strong possession of her: "Does Sadiri, the *heidouc*, look anything like these two, do you happen to know?"

Lukas explained that the men we had passed were *toshks*, plainsmen, as one might see from the braiding on their trousers; whereas Sadiri was of the *ghegs*, mountain folk, a somewhat handsomer race. "I am

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myself," he reminded us, modestly, "of the mountain people."

"Oh! So Sadiri is a handsome man, is he? And young, perhaps?"

"Quite young—so one has heard; not as yet fully bearded, like those men whom you have seen. Also," he said, with a recurrence of his fleeting smile, "since the Greek government has set a price upon Sadiri's head, it is not likely that even one so bold as he would make an appearance openly upon a public thoroughfare."

She saw that he had understood her thought, and was laughing at her. "Just the same," she declared, "no man who's ever loved a girl who looks like that is going to find it easy to forget her."

"No, miss," agreed Jorg Lukas, soberly.

We ourselves had some difficulty in forgetting her; that daughter of a tenacious line of island peasantry whose delicacy of limb and line suggested descent from the mythical Phæacians—Homer's "people who were akin to gods." Indeed, as our perspective grew upon Corfu, we found that she had become for us quite the *genius loci* of the island, with its remote, un-Western charm that is yet not in the least Oriental, and its air of gentle wildness which has survived there more than one of the world's most effete civilizations.

It was some years before chance took us back again—or rather not quite chance, since we had been at

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pains to select a cruise-boat whose itinerary included that once popular resort of ever-shifting fashion. And as we reëntered the grateful shadow of its arcades, grown in the interim a trifle shabbier and more weather-worn, we were not greatly surprised to find a familiar figure, also a trifle shabbier and more weather-worn, rising politely from one of the sidewalk coffee-tables to take possession of us.

"I have been watching for your boat," murmured Jorg Lukas, with an air of faint reproach for the delay. "That silver-gilt icon of Saint Spiridion which madam desired for her collection can now be bought quite cheaply, since the exchange is favorable."

We had little more than an hour or so ashore; yet our immediate decision was for a drive out to the place where we, like Ulysses, had first discovered Nausicaa playing with her ball; a decision odd enough, considering that we had seen the girl only once, for a too-brief moment. But Jorg Lukas accepted it quite as a matter of course. The island country was even more remote and delicately empty than one remembered; spaced groves of oak and laurel and ilex, where nymphs and dryads had just been dancing; occasional decorative peasant huts of plaster, each with its deep, earth-floored portico and the huge ringed water-jar standing at its door; roadsides blackened here and there by the waste of olive-presses, whose not unpleasant clean acidity scented the air—for Minerva's gift, the olive, remains the sole source of wealth to an island which the



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world's traffic has long passed by. But when we came to a certain place in the upper road, from which was formerly to be caught a glimpse of Lord Callender's garden and villa below, nothing was to be seen except a flowery jungle of flaunting liana-vine, and clematis, and wistaria.

"Why, but what's become of the house?" I exclaimed.

Our laconic guide remarked that no doubt the roof had collapsed at last beneath the weight of the verdure which covered it; the property, he added, having been long unoccupied.

"Unoccupied? Oh, poor girl! Then they did come, after all, to take her little boy away from her? Or was she allowed to go to England with him?"

Lukas remarked briefly that the child had not been taken to England, because he had in the meanwhile died. No, not of any illness, he said, in answer to our shocked question; he had merely been drowned, while playing on the beach near his mother.

The tragedy had occurred only a few days after we left Corfu, it appeared, and had been witnessed by some olive-pickers on the slope of the hill high above. They had noted the little boy running about the beach after a great striped ball he had—we remembered the ball—while his mother lay reading, with a shining thick mantle of hair spread over her shoulders, perhaps to dry—we remembered the hair, too. It may have been her book, or the low, steady plash of the quiet sea,

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which prevented her hearing the boy's little cry of distress when his ball bounded beyond his reach into the water. The men far above saw the small figure plowing sturdily out after it, saw an arm of the receding tide curve in to lift him from his feet, saw the little dark head bobbing helplessly for a moment in the ball's wake. Even before they began to run, shouting to her, the mother knew; but when she reached the floating ball, nothing else remained to break the long, smooth swell of the rollers. They saw her seeking desperately about, tearing at her hair, beating at the waves with frantic hands, plunging under them again and again, till they thought she would herself drown before they could get to her. Then a strange thing happened. Once, twice, three times, the voice of the woman who had been dumb rose in a cry so terrible, so heartrending, that the knees of the running men went weak under them; nor was it only a cry they heard. Standing there shoulder-deep in the tide, her hands covering her ears, the agonized creature began to speak—piercing, thin, far-carrying words, as if to some listener at a very great distance.

"The 'telegraph-talk'!" I exclaimed, under my breath. I had heard of this unique and curious ability of Albanian mountain folk to throw their voices to incredible distances, so that miles away people might hear and understand. "But how could a Corfu woman have learned it, Lukas? Surely not in those few weeks she lived among the *heidoucs*!"

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"Madam forgets," he said, "that the girl's father was not Corfiot, but a man of Epirus."

"You mean it's a matter of inheritance among your people?"

"Perhaps, madam. It may also," he added, hesitantly, "explain those voices of the ora which are heard sometimes in our mountain places; I do not know."

After that, he said, the olive-pickers saw a happening even stranger. They saw that a small sail had already put out from the mainland opposite, which at that point is quite close to the Corfu shore; just such a shallow-skimming boat as had once at dawn brought the missing wife back to her husband. They saw it dart like a flying gull over the water, far more rapidly than their stumbling, heavy-shod feet could carry them, toward the spot where the woman swayed half submerged, hair floating out around her like a drowned creature's; saw it veer about, and go skimming out of the bay again. When they reached the shore at last, the woman was not there. Only the child's bright ball was left, bobbing and dipping far out toward the open ocean.

After a long moment my companion said, rather shakenly: "So it *was* Sadiri, then, whom we saw under the arcades! Lingerin within call of her, of course; probably by prearrangement. It was he she summoned to her from across the water, wasn't it? Wasn't it, Jorg Lukas?" The man did not answer. "Oh, but why didn't

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she let him come for her sooner, before she had to lose that darling little boy?"

"Perhaps," he suggested, dispassionately, "it was because the old man who was still her husband had not yet died—our women being ever of faithful nature." And she must in any case have lost the child soon or late, he reminded us, stoically; what difference whether in death or life? No doubt other children would presently bring her comfort.

"Are there other children, Lukas?" I demanded, fixing him with a compelling eye.

"Two, madam," he answered simply, dropping subterfuge. "Both men-children, and both with the lusty vigor of the father; and she is able to talk to them like any other woman now, and even has been heard singing to them—or so it is reported."

"By whom, Jorg?" asked my companion, softly. "By the driver of the automobile, perhaps—the one who betrayed Lord Callender's plans to the brigands?"

He said, with dignity: "It was not the driver of the automobile who gave that information to Sadiri—he is no Shoshi man! It was Lord Callender's confidential servant."

"Who was yourself?"

"Who was myself, naturally."

She shook hands with him then; I followed suit; and we parted with our reliable Albanian in silence.

# ÎLE DE MORT







VI

ÎLE DE MORT

HE CAME upon the place by accident—if it is ever quite accident that brings a man to the various crises of his destiny. The captain of the small Italian steamer in which he happened to be making the round of the Adriatic expatiated one evening, blowing kisses into the air from bunched finger tips after the extravagant Latin fashion, upon the beauty of Greek island women—not merely of the young girls, who are sufficiently beautiful in any land, but of the mature women who, he said, did not thicken in the hips and wits like matrons elsewhere, but gained with each year in warm

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allure up to the very breaking-point. This, he assured the young American, was the mark of an antique and classic lineage. So that when, on a late spring afternoon, they came to Greece's nearest outpost, Corfu, Rodney was much intrigued; and from there he fared no farther, having discovered in its inner harbor the very thing he had been seeking in vain over half of Europe—the original of Böcklin's "Isle of Death."

A print of this somewhat outmoded masterpiece had hung, during his boyhood, over Rodney's bed, to affect with its dim, suggested mysteries the secret dreaming of an imaginative boy, as such pictures will. Once he had inquired of his mother where the island itself could be found. "Ask your father," she had shrugged. "He brought the picture back from a trip to Europe, the year before we were married, because it reminded him of something, somewhere, I dare say; something sentimental, of course."

Young Meredith, however, did not ask his father; the two were curiously sympathetic. And when he came over for his own year of European wandering, after the family fashion, before settling down to the family profession of law, he found himself looking about everywhere to discover in the life that remembered grouping of tall blue cypresses amid ivory walls, reflected in a wine-dark sea. He had hoped in vain to find it somewhere among the Italian lakes. Again, under the impression that the Château d'If might be the original of the picture, he visited Marseilles; only



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to discover that while the empty, echoing sea-fortress, haunted by the names of many tragic great who have broken their hearts within its walls, might very well be called an Isle of Death, it was certainly not the one of the painter's imagining. So that to come thus unexpectedly upon the object of his quest afloat in the dim blue twilight of Corfu's inner harbor, spelled for the younger Meredith both romance and adventure, and he wished that there were somebody really to share it with—preferably his father, several years dead; failing him, some woman different from any he had chanced to know, especially from his cousin Jane, whom it was generally expected that he would one day marry. Of the latter he thought with an occasional affectionate twinge of conscience; she had been so awfully decent about his coming away. His mother had wanted them to be married before he left; a wife, she insisted, was such a settling influence for a young man subject to artistic impulses. But Jane herself would not hear of the idea. "I don't want any half-men husbanding me about!" she had declared. "Go on over and get Europe out of your system, Roddy. Gloat over all the ruins and cathedrals, eat up all the proper pictures, get eaten up by all the improper ladies. Then if you think you'd like to marry me, come back and try. I'll probably be waiting for you." Dear little honest, understanding young Jane. . . .

He found that he had come to Corfu at a most auspicious time, the Easter season. The entire place was

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gay with flowers, even the innumerable bootblack stands along the streets; while the carcasses of slaughtered animals hanging in front of every market stall wore blossoms tucked into all available apertures, quite embarrassing. The afternoon promenade, which never fails in a South-European neighborhood, had been roped off from wheeled traffic and freshly sprinkled, so that it smelled invitingly of hot wet dust; and there, at one of the coffee-tables which overflowed from the shop arcades to the grass opposite, Rodney was enabled to appraise the passing beauty of Corfu on parade.

Perhaps it did better, he thought, presently, when not on parade. Even the few in picturesque native dress—a thick double halo of hair twisted about the back of the head, a white or yellow kerchief worn over a many-ruffled bodice—had not been able to resist the temptation of European patent leather, much too tight, in which the fine, free peasant walk became a graceless hobble.

“Why will they do it?” complained Rodney to a man who was drinking coffee at the table beside his own—a bareheaded, very florid gentleman in tweeds, whom he took to be some visiting Englishman. “Why will the native women everywhere, nowadays, ruin their æsthetic values by aping the clothes of the ordinary tourist?”

The man replied, in English so hesitant and strongly accented that Rodney saw he was mistaken: “It is pos-

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sible, monsieur, that our Corfiote girls find the clothing of Europe less dear than what you call their æsthetic values. A peasant costume of parade must be always of the finest material, elaborately embroidered; it is with our people a heritage from mother to daughter. And if one shall have been obliged by circumstances to part from one's heritage—" He shrugged expressively, and added, "We Corfiots have become of late years somewhat impoverished in purse, monsieur."

Rodney said, with quick courtesy: "I did not realize that you were native here yourself, sir, or I would not have spoken as I did. I mistook you for a passing Englishman."

"I am an Englishman," replied the other, "if not a passing one. My people have lived here on the island since the days of the British occupancy; which is to say since 1800, or thereabouts. My name is Brandreth, Demetrios Brandreth; at your service, monsieur—" he bowed formally. "And I am well pleased that you spoke to me," he added, with a bashful smile which was the most British thing about him, "since I was at the moment endeavoring to find enough courage to address you. One regrets any lost opportunity to perfect one's mother-tongue; here one forms rather the habit of using bad French, or Italian, or the native speech. My mother, do you see, happened to be a lady of this island."

"You mean a Greek, sir?"

"Naturally, yes."

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It explained the oddity of his accent, also certain mannerisms and gestures rather at variance with the traditional British calm. Then Rodney remembered where he had lately seen the name "Brandreth": Upon a leaning headstone in a strange little cemetery he had chanced upon that morning, whose rusted gate bore the appropriate legend, "Here the busy world is hushed." Goats grazed peacefully among the mounds; drying garments—obviously the caretaker was, in her lighter moments, a laundress by profession—fluttered cheerfully between cypresses. The young man had noted that a few of the more important-looking monuments bore names of mingled Greek and English origin, such as that of a certain Lady Emily Cozziris; which surprised him. It is not often that British residents of foreign places intermarry with the natives. He noted, too, that a great preponderance of names were those of children, poor little English Jims and Tims and Pollys who had evidently not thriven in this more exotic island climate. Mr. Demetrios Brandreth was, no doubt, one of the few survivals of the long-past British protectorate. And somehow the quiet pathos of that "corner of a foreign field which is forever England" invested also this middle-aged blond gentleman who regarded a distant island he had never seen as "home," and who felt such need of practicing the tongue of his forefathers that he was driven to seek the acquaintance of passing strangers.

"My brother," he was saying with vicarious pride,

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"was quite fluent in English, having been educated at home. But that was in the days when our Corfu products were more in demand—we ourselves happen to be olive-growers, monsieur. And now that the exchange between Greece and other countries is so unfavorable"—he shrugged apologetically—"one finds it no longer possible to travel." Which had, however, its advantages, he added, since people now came over from Athens for the season to open their country estates again, instead of frequenting European spas and beaches. Once more the society of Corfu had become quite good.

"There is really 'society' at Corfu, then?" asked young Meredith.

Mr. Brandreth replied, with dignity: "There has always been society at Corfu. While it is not now so cosmopolitan as formerly, it is very agreeable. We have our English Club—the *Société de Lecture*; also you will find good tennis, riding, swimming——"

"And good-looking girls?" demanded Rodney. "I was promised something really special in the way of Greek beauty."

"Of that," said the other, gravely and rather quaintly, "there is even an excess, monsieur, so that to make a choice is well-nigh impossible; many of us remain, therefore, bachelors."

"I congratulate you, sir," grinned the American. "But where, if I may ask, does one discover this more aristocratic type of siren?"

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The other made a deprecating gesture. "Not, naturally, upon the public promenade; although our younger gentlewomen sometimes amuse themselves by watching it while sipping coffee with their friends at certain chosen tables"—he indicated a café at the upper end of the Esplanade. "These that you see passing here are merely the simpler townsfolk. But if you will care to come with me some morning to our tennis-courts—" He paused abruptly.

Down through the arcades, moving among the sidewalk tables with an easy freedom of carriage that alone would have made her notable in any crowd, came a slight, arresting figure which obviously did not belong among the simpler townsfolk. She wore, apparently, widow's weeds, since a veil floated diaphanously above a becoming white coif and wimple, like a nun's. Carrying a tall cane, à la Tosca, she moved slowly and gracefully along the full length of the Esplanade, not pausing at the café where Corfu's élite were wont to congregate, to a table directly opposite Rodney's; where two young men, tongue-tied with gratification, rose eagerly to welcome her. She seated herself facing him, so that Rodney was able to look his fill before she lifted her eyes and caught him staring.

The face was less nunlike than the costume—*spirituelle* in the Gallic sense of the word; a proudly aquiline nose, delicate brows arched over dark eyes which narrowed when they smiled—as they did, very slightly, on meeting the gaze of the American—and a

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mobile, sensitive mouth. It was a face of strong allure, rather than of conventional beauty. Then, as her gaze transferred itself from Rodney to Mr. Brandreth, she nodded to the latter with a faint air of irony, and he rose in the European fashion to bow deeply from the waist.

"Here," said the American, half to himself, "we have something! Do you mind telling me who the lady is?"

"It is the Kyria Clymene Dessylas," answered the other, slowly, almost unwillingly, "who has been considered the most charming woman in Athens."

"'Kyria'—that means 'madam,' doesn't it? A widow, I suppose. She is one of the season's visitors?"

"Ah no. Madame Clymene has returned, one understands, to live indefinitely," said the other, still rather slowly. "'Dessylas' is one of our great names here, monsieur. The lady is Corfiote born."

"Oh!" said Rodney, and thought rather better of Corfu.

A silence fell. The American hoped that his new friend might offer to present him, fancying from the lady's occasional careless glance in his direction that she herself was not averse to the idea; but Mr. Brandreth rose, after a moment or two, and took his leave.

"I shall give myself the pleasure," he said ceremoniously, as the two shook hands, "to call at your hotel, if I may, and to bring you there a card for our English Club, monsieur. Also, if you still desire,"

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he added, with a grave, significant smile, "to introduce you to some of those pretty young ladies about whom you made inquiry."

"That would be awfully kind of you, sir," said young Meredith. "There's nothing I'd like better."

He felt it necessary, nevertheless, to know more immediately about Madame Clymene Dessylas, and overcame a reluctance to discussing personalities with servants sufficiently to make inquiries of the suave Greek *concierge* at his hotel. It was true, the man said, lowering his voice confidentially, that the Kyria had returned to live permanently on Corfu, no doubt because of the unfortunate monetary exchange; but that she had not opened the family country house, preferring to take up her abode in a modest *spiti* in the town, being one who had ever enjoyed the companionship of her fellow men. This was, added the explicit *concierge*, a small blue plaster house at the far end of the crescent facing the water, with a high-walled garden at one side; and there the Kyria, accustomed to surroundings of great elegance, was now content to live very simply, attended only by her faithful *si'ora*; with, naturally, an excellent cook as well, since she received much company.

"Her '*si'ora*,'" repeated the American. "You mean '*signora*'? Some Italian lady who is her companion, perhaps?"

But the good Kahli was not a *dame de compagnie*, shrugged the *concierge*; merely a trusted maidservant



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who had been for a long time in the Dessylas' employ; so that she was called "*si'ora*" by courtesy, as such old servitors often were.

That night young Meredith was inducted further into the local customs of Corfu. While smoking in the hotel garden after a late dinner, he was startled, at the first stroke of midnight, by a sudden pandemonium of drums and trumpets and pealing bells, mingled with a piteous bleating from all directions, which on the final stroke of the hour came to a climax in a prolonged shattering crash, as of musketry.

"What in the world," he demanded of the *concierge*, "is all this?"

The man explained soothingly that it was merely the peace of Paques being properly ushered in. The paschal lambs had just been sacrificed, and the house doors crossed with atoning blood; while the crash of musketry which had so startled him was merely the accumulated broken crockery of the island, saved throughout the year by every good housewife for this auspicious moment, to be shattered with one accord upon the cobblestones. This, explained the *concierge* further, was done to discredit the memory of Judas Iscariot, said by ignorant historians to have been a native of Corfu; but this was a gross injustice to the island, since every native knew that he was no true Greek but merely one of the treacherous Albanians, born upon the mainland of Epirus, opposite. . . . Rodney made a mental note to

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suggest the crockery idea at home as a Fourth of July substitute for firecrackers.

Since, after such excitement, the town had naturally no thought of retiring tamely to bed, Rodney followed the major portion of it to the church of the island's patron saint, Spiridion, where a Resurrection Mass was in active progress. His eye, becoming presently accustomed to the flickering of innumerable hanging silver lamps within, reflected from the enormous silver coffin of the saint, observed in the kneeling congregation not only the figure of his friend Mr. Demetrios Brandreth—somewhat to his surprise, until he recalled the Greek mother—but also that of Madame Clymene Dessylas. He decided to wait near the door till the crowd came out.

But the midnight mass apparently intended to go on indefinitely. Priests intoned; a young soldier in khaki uniform came out from behind the Holy of Holies and sang, unaccompanied and very beautifully, some strange Greek music; another young man appeared in a sort of niche high in the wall and read sonorously from a tome that might have been the Doomsday Book. Rodney's unaccustomed knees refused at last to support him further, and he slipped outside to the beggars' bench which ran along the church wall. Here he was shortly joined by a worshiper evidently in worse case than himself, a stout old peasant woman in native dress, with her feet crowded, as usual, into ill-

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fitting patent-leathers. From these she gazed plaintively to the gentleman beside her, sighing aloud.

He encouraged her, in French: "Do take them off! I won't look."

"*Comme monsieur est aimable,*" she murmured, accepting the suggestion; and wriggled her white-stockinged toes in glad relief. "*Ah, ces sales brutes!*" she muttered, glaring resentfully at the patent-leathers.

"Brutes indeed," agreed Rodney. "Why do you ever wear them?"

"But, monsieur, it is the Paques!" she replied. Obviously there were more ways than one of making the Easter sacrifice on Corfu.

"Do you mind if I light a cigarette?" Rodney asked, presently, as they waited. "Or perhaps you'll join me?"

The old creature gave him a startled side glance, then chuckled respectfully. "The English," she murmured, "must have ever their little drolleries! Me, I am a virtuous woman, monsieur, although unmarried; one sees it from the yellow kerchief, *hein?*"

"One does indeed," apologized Rodney, with gravity. "A thousand pardons, mademoiselle."

At that moment a voice sounded near them, whose low, husky timbre he recognized at once, although he had never heard it. "Si'ora, you are here? Ah, but yes, I see. Come, my Kahli, we shall now go; it is too much to ask, I exhaust myself." Then, with a slightly dramatic start, she became aware of Rodney's presence;

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and he, at the same moment, became aware that the servant had been sent out, like the dove from the Ark, for reconnoitering purposes. The knowledge gave him pleasure.

He rose and bowed, without speaking. It was the lady who said at once: "But one has seen you before today, monsieur, with our good friend Brandreth, no?"

He bowed again. "I was hoping he would present me to you at the time, madame."

"I, too," she said, with charming candor; and her smiling eyes narrowed at him again in a way that he remembered. "But he grows old, *ce cher* Dmitri; also, I fear, a little jealous of those who are—younger."

"Who can blame him, madame," murmured Rodney, who had learned that sort of thing in Europe, "if he has long had the privilege of your friendship?"

She laughed, approvingly. "He has had that privilege," she murmured, "quite long enough to learn how, and when, to share it! You also fatigue yourself with our paschal celebrations? And they have only just begun! Now comes the breaking of the Lenten fast; friends must share together the Easter breads, the new wine, the fresh honey from Hymettus. The time of feasting approaches. Only I—" she sighed a little—"of all that company within, go to my home to break the fast alone. Unless," she added, in polite afterthought, "you, who are a stranger here, will care to break it with me?"

Rodney was frankly laughing, and she with him; he

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had known from the first that he was going home with her, but had wondered just how it was to be managed.

Through narrow streets they walked slowly, under the Easter stars, the old servant hobbling unhappily far in the rear; and talked with an easy candor that Rodney had not found since boyhood days, when he and his father had been able to discuss freely together all the affairs of the universe—except their own. But with this woman, an hour since utterly unknown to him, he realized that he could discuss, if necessary, even himself. Once, on the uneven cobblestones, she stumbled a little and he offered his arm, which she did not again relinquish. Occasionally they stopped talking, as if by mutual consent, and looked at each other. Once at such a moment she said under her breath, strangely: "Is it you?" And he answered, with some unsteadiness: "I think that perhaps it is." Afterwards, he realized that he had been a little drunk with her.

They came at last to her house—reluctantly enough on the part of Rodney, who feared that walls would break the spell of magic that was upon them. She led him through a long room of many mirrors, into a garden more intimate than any room, with its vine-clad walls and thick, fragrant verdure. There a low stone table was laid with linen, china, candles in tall glass shades.

"Oh! You are expecting other guests," he exclaimed, in boyish disappointment.

"One is always expecting guests—I happen to have,"

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she shrugged, "a quite famous cook. But not now, not tonight." She said something in a low voice to Kahli, who went muttering away and presently returned with a tray of refreshment; Rodney could not afterwards remember what, except that there were small *brioche*s decorated in red candy eggs, and the usual thick, sweet Eastern coffee. Food was a matter of small importance by comparison with the current of talk which flowed on quietly and evenly between them, above an under-current of something deeper than talk. Once, touching his foot with hers, she murmured in English: "You must please to eat, if only to satisfy my servant, who has the eyes of Argus. Pretend, at least, to enjoy her honey of Hymettus, which is considered a great delicacy."

He obediently pretended. "It is delicious! But there is an odd aftertaste, not quite sweet—a little acrid, almost bitter."

"So? The bees of Hymettus have been regaling themselves, perhaps, on things forbidden—nicotine, even garlic. Naughty bees!" She put some on her lips, and tasted it with the tip of her tongue.

He murmured, with sudden daring, "I think I might appreciate the honey of Hymettus better if I were to taste it—as you are doing."

"On my lips?" she laughed at him. "And why not? Why not—since we celebrate the season of Resurrection?" She leaned toward him.

At that moment another guest appeared, led out

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obsequiously by old Kahli. "Your *si'ora* tells me that you are receiving guests for the Easter breakfast, Clymene. It is like old times—" He paused abruptly at sight of Meredith.

"*Peste*—that Kahli!" muttered the lady; but said, aloud, "Certainly I am receiving, dear Brandreth. Am I not always at home to my friends? But you are late. My neighbors, Monsieur and Madame Hafid Bey, are also late—Go, Si'ora, tell them that we await them. Also tell any others you may find. . . . You will like my Turkish neighbors," she added, for Rodney's benefit. "A true love-affair. She was the favorite of his concubines. So charming of Hafid to keep her on when he was forced to confine himself to the one wife only! And they play excellent bridge. You enjoy cards, no doubt, like all Americans?"

A few moments later an urbane little man, very dark, was ushered into the garden, followed by an extremely plump, arch lady, dressed in the height of Paris *chic*, but wearing a jewel on every finger of each hand, thumbs included. "Ah, *ma petite* Haidi!" welcomed Madame Dessylas, saying under her breath to the American, "Quick, your name?"

"Paul Rodney—" he began, but was not allowed to finish.

"I have been wanting you to meet, ever since he arrived, this delightful American, Monsieur Paul Rodney, who has come with letters to me, letters from very old friends," continued his hostess, blandly. "Such an

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addition to our little circle! Mad about bridge, of course. And as for dancing—*garde à toi, ma chère!*”

The spell was broken. The rest of that strange Easter dawning was a sort of fantastic nightmare to young Meredith. The breakfast party was augmented from time to time by several men, and an elderly German lady introduced as the Gräfin Neuenstein, whose multiplicity of warts gave her a startling resemblance to a toad. As the sun rose above the garden, the company, blinking like disturbed night owls, adjourned to the mirror-lined drawing-room, where it was found that without their hostess, who did not play, there were just enough to make two tables at cards. Rodney was at first successful enough, but presently his luck turned; and as the stakes were high, he found himself losing rather more money than he cared to spend. It was then that a slight, significant glance from the servant Kahli, entering with further refreshment, caused him instinctively to turn and observe that in the mirror behind him it was possible for the Gräfin, seated at his right, to see the entire reflection of his hand. Thereafter his losses were less heavy. A little later, when he arose to take his leave, the Turk declared suavely that he himself would play host to the company that same evening. “*Ce cher* Monsieur Rodney,” he suggested, “will be wanting his little revenge, no doubt!” He had been the Gräfin’s partner.

Meredith declined the invitation civilly enough, but without excuse; and Madame Dessylas accompanied



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him to the outer door. "I am afraid," she murmured, "that you do not find our little circle quite congenial."

"No. Do you?" said Rodney. The curious intimacy between them had not, apparently, been broken with the spell.

She shrugged, noncommittally. "I? Ah, well, in the provinces one must put up with what one finds."

"Surely you might find something better," said Rodney, bluntly, "than an old Prussian harpy who cheats at cards, and an ogling odalisque fresh from the harem? Mr. Brandreth tells me there is really good society here."

She laughed, and said, amiably: "Then you must allow him to introduce you to it. The kind Dmitri! How pleased he will be to arrange tennis for you with pretty Mademoiselle Claire, fresh from her convent school; or riding with his niece, Aglaia, who has the figure and grace of a hitching-post; or swimming with the little Countess Théotoki, who speaks only to titter. You may even pay your compliments to their thick mammas. And then," she added, with her delicious crinkling of the eyes, "you shall come back and beg to be cheated at cards by noble Prussians, and ogled by *chic* odalisques, and—fed upon wild honey. Go then; by all means, go!" She pushed him from the door gayly, but so forcibly that he almost fell over the step; and the rest of the day he devoted to more serious pursuits.

Under the guidance of Mr. Brandreth he visited

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the English Club, a somnolent, eminently respectable institution whose walls were hung with portraits of bishops, ex-governors, and other British worthies, and whose tables bore, among various Greek periodicals, a few outdated issues of *Punch* and the *Manchester Guardian*. There were also a moth-eaten billiard table or two, and some chessboards. The rooms at the moment were quite empty. Mr. Brandreth explained, obviously preening himself, that the membership of the club was most exclusive, confining itself to Anglo-Greek families and their immediate circle; not like the former Casino, to which any person who cared to do so might have access—though life on Corfu had been somewhat more lively, he admitted, in the vulgar days of the Casino.

Afterwards, the good gentleman took his protégé to the former British Residency, now a museum, where, presiding over a charity sale of native handiwork, they discovered the more exclusive feminine society of Corfu *en masse*. Here Rodney was presented, even as Madame Dessylas had prophesied, to a blushing Mademoiselle Claire, to an adolescent countess who conversed only in titters, and to the equestrienne Aglaia. All had the shy demureness of well-bred young French girls, and all promptly invited the presentable young American to one house or another for tea or tennis. But he found their pretty chatter as insipid, compared with the casual, free utterances of Clymene Dessylas, as—he searched his mind for her own simile—the sort of

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honey one buys in glass, nicely strained and sanitary, compared with the odd, subtly acrid product he had tasted at the house of the Athenian lady.

As soon as possible after dinner, therefore, he lifted the knocker of the blue-painted door to inquire the address of the Turkish gentleman, Hafid Bey, at whose house she would most probably be playing cards. But the servant, Kahli, invited him, without enthusiasm, to enter; her Kyria, she said, was already awaiting monsieur in the garden.

He said to his hostess there, toward dawn: "Your *s'ora* doesn't quite like me, I'm afraid! I wonder why?"

"On the contrary, she likes you too much," was the amused reply. "She wishes to protect you from me, whom she regards as a *femme fatale*—Kahli has her maternal yearnings over beautiful young men. But I do not think"—the narrowed eyes glinted into his—"that she will succeed this time, my friend. Do you?"

Thereafter, he made no effort to seek other society, but devoted himself exclusively to what he could get of hers; after all, since his time in Corfu was necessarily limited, why waste it? Although he found her companionship the most stimulating and satisfying he had known, they did not again resume the sudden, rather dangerous intimacy of their first hours together; a slight restraint had come upon their relation, whether on her side or his own he did not know. "We began a little too fast," he thought, relieved to find his first

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rather startled estimate of her mistaken. A free spirit, obviously, accustomed to a society more mondaine, and chafing a bit under middle-class provincial conventions. But there was a poise about her, a fine, careless dignity, an indifference to the opinions of her equals combined with a warmly personal friendliness toward inferiors, which he found essentially aristocratic. He was not surprised to learn, from his fount of local information, the *concierge*, that Madame Dessylas' family were formerly accustomed to move in the highest of Court circles, and he recalled the saying of some well-known classicist that the Greeks were the only people who found themselves entirely at home in the world.

It was she who introduced him to Corfu, ancient and modern, as no professional guide could have done; the place of her birth was evidently very dear to Clymene Dessylas, despite her obvious sense of exile there. Daily, after the hour of the siesta, they explored the island's uttermost recesses. She showed him the Prussian metamorphosis of Empress Elizabeth's beloved sea retreat, the Achilleon; also the far more appealing slow decay of Mon Repos—known to the island speech as "Maurepau"—which was a favorite residence of the last king of Greece when his brother lived there with an American bride. "But now they never come back. That," she shrugged, with the touch of melancholy he sometimes sensed in her, "should be the device on Corfu's shield—"They never come back."

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Eh, well! All the more reason to make the most of what is left to us, no?"

It was only late in the afternoon, however, since the blue-washed house remained wrapped in matutinal slumber until at least four o'clock, that this daily tête-à-tête was possible, for at night there were always other claims upon Madame Dessylas' company. No matter how early he went to her after dinner, there were already guests in garden and drawing-room—usually masculine, although several women had the run of the house; all of whom were made equally at home, free as in a club to enjoy themselves as they pleased. Rodney had, indeed, the growing impression that his friend's little establishment had somewhat taken the place of the late-lamented Casino. In that, Mr. Brandreth once remarked, the lady followed the example of her father, who had ruined himself entertaining his friends. Some of the guests played cards, others read—he had discovered in Madame Clymene's library a far more interesting collection of reading-matter than at the *Société de Lecture*. Sometimes there was a little music. But the majority came for the favorite Greek pastime of conversation. It was better talk than the American had heard in any circle outside of Paris, broadly catholic of interest, witty and unbiased, of which their hostess was invariably the center. In the house she did not wear mourning, but affected clear, light colors, draped like the Tanagra figurines, confined by a wide silver belt, and with a great many heavy bracelets

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chiming musically the length of her bare arms. Once the veil, slipping from her head, revealed it covered with soft little pale gold curls, close-cut like a boy's, which Rodney found very endearing. But as a rule head and shoulders were swathed in some diaphanous tissue. It was, she explained, a Corfu custom. "Naturally in cities one dresses *comme tout le monde*, out of Paris; but in simple places, not of the world, I like to suggest a little the native costume; here the *pelturina*, for example"—she touched the becoming, nunlike folds about her throat—"just as in your country, *mon cher*, I should wish to wear, as a matter of courtesy, perhaps an eagle's feather, or necklaces of—how do you call it?—wampum beads."

Rodney grinned at the picture of this ensemble in an American drawing-room, wondering where she had heard of wampum beads; nevertheless, he found her wish to associate herself with the customs of her environment rather charming. It seemed to him part of her winning tact toward the humbler citizens of the place, who obviously adored her.

Not so those persons who constituted, according to Mr. Brandreth, polite Corfu society. In the intervals of waiting for the Dessylas house to awake from its protracted daily siesta, Rodney occasionally presented himself at the English Club; and once he went again to the Residency, remembering with compunction the girls who had received him there so cordially, Mademoiselles Claire, Aglaia, and the rest. But these appeared,

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in the interim, to have quite forgotten the acquaintance, or to recall it only with difficulty. Rodney, whose tall good looks and forthright simplicity of manner had accustomed him to his share of feminine indulgence, was both piqued and amused. Apparently his companionship with the charming widow was not to his credit in this quarter. No doubt she paid the price of her charm and of her unconventionality; they would regard this woman of a world so different from their own as a little emancipated, perhaps—a *femme lancée*; and the thought of women's cruelty to women the world over sobered his amusement, roused in him the quick chivalry latent in most young men. The island would be a rather narrow place to live in permanently, he thought, if one had enemies. He found himself wondering a little about the husband.

"How long," he inquired of the informative *conciergerie*, "has Madame Dessylas been a widow?" The man hesitated, and Rodney repeated the question in different form: "When did Monsieur Dessylas die?"

The man said that it was a matter of several years, perhaps three or four. "But the Kyrios Dessylas, sir, was madame's father; not her husband."

"Oh, I see!" said Rodney. It dawned on him suddenly that his friend was probably not a widow, but a divorcée who had resumed her father's name. That would explain the lightness of her mourning, worn only on the street—European widows usually took their *crêpe* more seriously; it would also explain the dis-

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approval of Corfu's élite. He recalled the strong English prejudice against divorce; shared, indeed, by the old-fashioned American city of his own birth. There came to mind a conversation between his mother and his aunts as to whether it was necessary for them to call upon some returned Philadelphian who was, as the polite euphemism went, "no longer living with her husband."

Deliberately he arranged for his next rendezvous with his friend to take place publicly at one of the coffee-tables on the Esplanade, in order that whoever cared to do so might observe his open allegiance to the lady's cause; and while he waited for her there, he was joined by Mr. Demetrios Brandreth. This gentleman he had frequently encountered in the Dessylas drawing-room and elsewhere, and even dined once at his house, *en garçon*; a dinner whose careful Englishness of menu he found rather touching. But since their first meeting a certain constraint had arisen between the two, which Rodney, who liked the older man, had tried in vain to dissipate. This was particularly marked when Mr. Brandreth asked, rather haltingly, whether his company at coffee would be an intrusion.

"Of course not, sir! I'm only waiting, as usual, for Madame Dessylas," said the American, very cordially, "who will be as glad to see you as I am."

Mr. Brandreth bowed and seated himself. "One is pleased," he said, "that you have found our island



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interesting enough to have postponed your departure somewhat beyond your expectations.”

“As a matter of fact,” smiled Rodney, “I keep on postponing it from boat to boat, unable to tear myself away.”

Mr. Brandreth did not smile in return. “You are not the first; nor will you be,” he commented, significantly, “the last.” He paused, and added with obvious effort: “Monsieur, if you were to observe a boat in strange waters, let us say, drifting unsuspectingly upon some hidden reef, you would, no doubt, make an effort to save, or at least to warn it?”

The young American flushed in quick resentment. “I won’t pretend to misunderstand you; but I am surprised, sir. I had rather understood you to have been yourself an admirer of the lady we seem to be discussing.”

“I was, and am—rather more than an admirer.” The other’s flush equaled Rodney’s. “That is why I feel myself compelled to speak, being one of those who have, as you put it, been unable to tear themselves away. There have been many such, my friend.”

“I dare say. Look here, sir, the fact of the matter is that she’s a very fascinating woman, whom you once probably tried to marry and couldn’t, to be quite frank, and whose lack of small-town conventionalities is bound to be misunderstood by a lot of other women who are jealous of her. Isn’t that it?”

“Not entirely, monsieur. It was never with me,”

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said the other, still painfully flushed, "a question, for example, of marriage. That would have been, in the circumstances, impossible."

"You mean she was already married? She had not at the time divorced her husband?"

"There was never," said the other, reluctantly, "a husband to divorce, monsieur. The lady has not married."

Rodney said, rather startled, "She is always called 'madame!'"

"She is more usually called 'kyria.' But 'madame' also is a courtesy often used toward ladies of a certain rank or a certain age."

The young man laughed, despite a mounting uneasiness. "You could hardly use the term 'a certain age' in that connection!" he protested.

It was the first time any such speculation had occurred to Rodney. She was, no doubt, somewhat older than himself; there was an ease of manner, a gay serenity, a subtlety of wit that suggested wide experience. But her skin had the clear, smooth texture of youth itself; the eyes, darkened a little about lids and lashes—most women used make-up nowadays, of course—were transparent as a girl's. He mentioned these things to his companion, who replied, briefly: "They are clever in such ways at Athens; cleverer than at Paris. Ladies of her sort find it necessary to retain their youth."

The young man frowned over the expression, "Ladies of her sort." It occurred to him that this simple gentle-

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man, confined to his narrow island circle, might very well misunderstand that untrammelled existence of the modern bachelor woman which Rodney and his friends took quite for granted; he would regard it with the same suspicion many older men of his acquaintance felt toward the private lives of actresses. But whatever the lady might seem to others was certainly no concern of Rodney's, since to him she had shown herself only the most discreet and sympathetic of companions, making of their brief passing friendship something to be always remembered with pride and gratitude. In that moment he knew that it was she, not himself, who had deliberately kept their relation free from emotional content. He said as much, simply and candidly, intending thereby to close an unwelcome discussion. But the older man had the final word.

"So I have seen; that is why," he said, with anxious gravity, "one felt a warning to be necessary. She is interested, monsieur. More than once men have ruined themselves in the attempt to win such marked favor as she has shown to you. The fact is that Madame Clymene bores herself upon Corfu; but since her fortunes no longer permit that she live elsewhere, there is for her only one escape."

"You mean marriage? You believe," said Rodney, incredulously, "that she might consider marrying *me*?"

The other hesitated. "Eh, well—why not? You have the attraction of youth, you are not displeasing to the eye"—he bowed in British deprecation of a compliment

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—"and you are, no doubt, a man of substance." He paused, and rose in sudden agitation. "She approaches. No, no, you will excuse me, please! I am no Judas, to break bread with one I have betrayed. Ah, but I beg of you to believe, my friend, that if the lady would even yet consent to accept my protection instead of yours—to marry me, in fact—I should consider myself most fortunate, most honored." He bowed himself hurriedly away.

Rodney watched her moving toward him down through the arcades, as he had first seen her; a gallant if slightly histrionic figure, greeting all she passed with the same smiling courtesy, even the beggar into whose confident palm she dropped a coin; saw, with new unease, her approach toward the tables where several of the young people who constituted Corfu society had congregated that afternoon. Then the thing he had feared for her occurred. Her smile, resting upon them in friendly passing fashion, encountered a blank, deliberate stare, not only from the girls but from their cavaliers, more than one of whom he had met in Madame Dessylas' drawing-room. She did not blench under the insult, merely included them all in her serene, indulgent gaze as one might include a group of gamboling urchins, even found a word of greeting for the obsequious waiter who attended them; and Rodney Meredith went quickly forward to meet her, white with anger. What man, he thought, remembering Mr. Brandreth's parting remark, would not feel himself

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fortunate and honored if a woman of this quality chose to marry him?

And so, next day, the two went together, for the first time, to visit Rodney's "Île de Mort." He had felt reluctant to risk disillusion by seeing too closely the thing that had appealed so strongly to his childish imagination. He had intended, if he visited the place at all, to do so alone; but the realization had grown upon him that Clymene would prove a companion sympathetic enough even for this. Her comment, when he suggested the excursion, put them back suddenly onto the plane of their first encounter: "I have been wondering when you would speak of it, my dear. You know"—she spoke lightly enough, but did not smile—"it is to that *îlot* that all the lovers of our island soon or late make pilgrimage, to invoke the blessing of its saint."

"Don't tell me a saint inhabits it! I should think a nymph would be more suitable."

"Both are there, no doubt. Also a priest, when required; also a nightingale. It is very *gemütlich*, as the Gräfin would say. And we must take with us one of Kahli's good basket suppers, that we may remain until the moon rises. That, too, is a local custom."

They rowed out late in the afternoon, the lady having discarded for once her black street dress and veil in favor of cool, sheer white and a wide-brimmed hat, which made her look rather younger than her companion. She wore no make-up that day, nor any of her

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exotic jewelry except a ring she was never without, a dark sapphire carved with a Medusa head, behind which Rodney had once been intrigued to discover a tiny secret compartment containing pellets which he mistook for a dyspepsia remedy much affected by his mother's circle. They were not, however, Clymene had assured him, intended for her digestion, which was excellent; but merely for the more serious ailment of ennui which sometimes troubled her. "The ring was the gift of a friend who happened to be of royal birth, poor dear," she explained, "and princes are so often afflicted with ennui. Especially when the time arrives for them to marry!"

They went along the lee of a lovely shore, passing deserted Maurepau, passing also an islet which contained a small convent where a few humble peasant nuns earned their meager subsistence by fishing and making nets. As they approached, they saw one of the sisterhood on a low rock, laving tired, gnarled old feet in the fresh tide; but she showed no embarrassment, merely stared eagerly, summoning others of the community to come and gaze also. Obviously it was not a cloistered order.

"They are admiring you, *mon cher*," murmured Madame Dessylas, mischievously. "It is not often these poor old ones have a chance to see such a fine young man at such close quarters."

He smiled back at them, and one of the sisters tossed some knotted green apples into the boat. "Would they

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be offended, do you think, if I threw them a few coins in return?" he asked his companion, *sotto voce*.

"I think they would be offended if you did not. After all," she reminded him, with a touch of the cynicism he had sometimes noted in her, "this is Greece!"

So they came, by slow degrees, to the bourne of his boyhood fancy; and found it, as so often with dreams which are realized, quite other than he had expected. The dimly seen marble walls of the picture became, approached from the rear, merely bare rock cliffs lifting out of the sea, the central cluster of cypresses concealing nothing more mysterious than a small landing-place with some steps leading steeply up to a bare little mariners' chapel above. This was to the American, like most Orthodox Greek churches he had seen, a curiously pagan place, despite the humble votive offerings and tinsel saints' icons that decorated it.

On the outer wall of the chapel a bronze tablet bore this legend, inscribed in French: "Elizabeth of Austria has rested here. For her the winds sighed more softly, and the rock which offered its flowers to her loves to conserve her memory."

"The priest then in charge of the island placed it there," said Clymene Dessylas. "Poor man, he was probably one of the many adorers of the virtuous Elizabeth—who must have been, despite her virtue, rather a shocking flirt."

"A priest?" frowned Rodney.

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"Ah, but our Greek *pappas* are not necessarily celibate like your Western priesthood—they are permitted to be quite human, to love, even to marry. The present incumbent supports a large and growing family upon the contributions of pilgrims even poorer than himself. We must not forget to be a little generous." One of the things Rodney liked best in his friend was her unfailing thought of others.

Before dark fell, the pair explored the full extent of their domain, which proved to be occupied by a guardian dog, two cats, innumerable ants, and the promised nightingale. "Now I am content. Always I have wished, since I was a child," said the lady, dreamily, "to learn what secret thing might be hidden here."

"I, too!" said Rodney, half aloud. "But surely you've come before?"

"Once only." She added, a reminiscent smile warming her rather absent look: "Have I not told you that it is an especial pilgrimage for lovers, this little *ilot*?"

Unavoidably, Rodney was reminded of the half-revelations of Mr. Brandreth. "Even so, you are not trying to tell me," he said, bluntly, "that you have come here only once?"

Her brows lifted. "I have told you," was the quiet rebuke. "But I dare say tongues have been busy with my name to you, as always."

Rodney said, flushing: "I should not have allowed anybody to speak to me about you, Clymene! Except



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Brandreth, of course, who is as much your friend as I am."

"Ah yes, with him one is always safe. He has loved me, I think, since early childhood. It is because of me that he disappointed himself of the one ambition of his life—to complete his education like an Englishman, at Oxford."

"Because of you?" Rodney repeated.

"Yes. He was unwilling to leave Corfu himself lest I might return."

Rodney found himself a little dismayed. That educational disappointment must have occurred rather long ago, he thought, recalling the gentleman's undeniable appearance of middle age.

"But of all the men who have loved me a little—or even much," the lady continued, thoughtfully, "it is true that only one other has come with me to this place, *mon cher*. Because I also was in love with him, do you see."

The young man found some difficulty in listening. She had removed her broad shade hat, so that the clustering gold of her uncovered hair caught what was left of the waning light. For once, too, no veil shrouded the bared throat, that first treacherous feature to betray the approach of age. But the white column of it might have been smooth marble, except for a throbbing little hollow at the base which seemed meant for kisses; and Rodney must have yielded to the temptation had she not gently put him from her.

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"Not now—not yet," she murmured. "First we must talk a little, Paul." It was the first time she had used his name, which he had never thought to correct; he was still to her, as to Corfu at large, merely "Paul Rodney." "You have no curiosity, then, about that other lover whom I once brought to this place?"

He told her that he had not, quite truly. It was the present which interested him; the possible future.

"There is a boat," he said, abruptly, "going up to Trieste tomorrow; and I really ought to be taking it, you know."

"I know, yes. I have wondered," she replied, "when you would say this to me." There was a slight emphasis on the "you."

"Clymene," he said, rather incoherently, "will my going matter? Do you care?"

She answered him after a long moment, musing aloud: "But I always care. That is what keeps interest alive, ever new again. Not with some, of course, as with others. So, tonight I have come here with you."

He closed his eyes, realizing that he was not to avoid whatever it was she meant to tell him. "Very well! That other one you brought here—was he the first?"

"Of my lovers, you would ask? I cannot remember," she said, "who was the first of those. But he was the first to whom I wished to give myself in marriage. Also, he was the first, and the only one—" she smiled faintly—"to reject me."

Rodney opened his eyes. "Reject you? Why?"

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She shrugged. "Who knows? Perhaps because of the Prince. My father had declined to let us marry, you understand, for fear of displeasing the Prince."

"What prince?" demanded Rodney. "What had he to do with it?"

"Ah, you have not heard?" Madame Dessylas explained that it was a friend of her family, to whom her father in particular owed much preferment.

"And he was in love with you? He wanted to marry you himself?"

The lady smiled, again rather faintly. Princes of the blood, she said, were not as a rule able to marry the daughters of mere gentlemen; some other arrangement had usually to be effected.

"Do you mean to say," demanded the young man, aghast, "that your father preferred such an 'arrangement' for you to decent marriage?"

The lady said, explanatorily: "My father, although a mere gentleman, boasted a rather ancient lineage; and the man I loved was not of us, not even of the English, whom we know. He was of your race."

"An American?"

"Yes; a people whom my father regarded, no doubt unjustly"—she gave a little deprecatory shrug—"as a nation of merchants, of *commis voyageurs*. Those who come to us have usually something to sell—machinery, fuel oil, pneumatics ——"

"We are," interrupted Rodney, hotly, "a people who do not, at least, find it necessary to sell ourselves, or

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our young daughters! But I beg your pardon, Clymene."

"It is I who should beg yours, perhaps, for my father, who was," she admitted impartially, "a rather stupid person."

"Yet you allowed him to separate you from the man you loved?"

"Ah no, my father did not separate us. It was he, my lover, who in the end separated us. He went away."

"You mean the man behaved dishonorably to you?" But even as he asked the question Rodney knew that if she said it was so, he could not believe her. For he also knew, quite suddenly, who this other American was.

"Not dishonorably; let us rather say, strangely. When I realized that we could not marry—one does not willingly ruin those of one's own blood!—I offered to go away with him to America, Paris, anywhere, thinking that the Prince, finding me thus publicly compromised, would presently cease to want me, without any blame attaching to my father. But he refused. I have never quite understood why," she said, in obvious puzzlement. "I explained to him my father's ambition, the Prince's marked kindness to me since childhood. Yet he was only angry; he rowed from this island all the way back to the town without once speaking, even when I wept; and in the morning, when I sent my servant to the hotel begging him to come to me, he was already gone. He had left on an early boat,

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leaving no message, no address. Was it not inexplicable?"

Rodney did not find it inexplicable. The little warning bell which had begun ringing deep in his inner consciousness could no longer be ignored. He knew now why the "Isle of Death" had hung in his father's house, remindingly as a penitent wears his shirt of hair; knew, too, why his father had come home from his European wanderyear to marry immediately the most properly-brought-up young girl of his acquaintance—Rodney's mother. His own aching, throbbing pulses apprised him of that inevitable conflict between two hopelessly alien points of view, pagan and Puritan; and his pity was less for the tragic girl who had managed to kill, as men do, the thing she loved, than for that startled and disillusioned young passing mariner who, Ulysses fashion, had stopped his ears with wax and lashed himself to the mast in his need to escape what seemed, to one of his birth and training, utter ruin.

"I have not," Clymene was saying, lightly, "wept again for any man. But I had sworn to myself that if I might not marry that one, I should marry none; and I have kept my word. They spoil one's taste, the Americans, for other lovers who are less cool and modest, less like droll, earnest, very clean little boys. One would have liked one's sons to be American." He started a little when she leaned forward to lay her hand on his. "There are tears in your eyes, my Paul.

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Do not grieve for this, it is so long past. One forgets, in time, everything. And tomorrow another boat goes away from Corfu!" she sighed, smilingly. "But perhaps, after all, you will not go with it?"

He wished to say, in a sudden rush of emotion toward her, "Not unless you go with me, Clymene!" but contented himself, instead, with kissing the hand's soft palm, the graceful arm from which he pushed back the sleeve, the curve of shoulder, and at last, unrebuked, that throbbing, exquisite hollow at the base of the throat, trying the while to forget something which gave him a sick and shamed sense of revulsion—the fact that in the suddenness of his ardor, her lovely disarray of pale-gold curls had slipped just a little to one side.

She noted his shiver even as he kissed her. "You are chilled, my dear?" she asked, solicitously.

He said that it was nothing—the night air—he had perhaps made a mistake in leaving his coat in the boat after the exercise of rowing. He rose to get it. It was then that he found there was no boat.

"Ah, how stupid! I should have remembered the tide," she said serenely, when he reported this disaster. She had offered to fasten the boat while he carried their various paraphernalia ashore. "It must have drifted half to the town by this time! No matter, the priest in charge will be coming over to say his mass quite early in the morning."

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"In the morning! You mean that we shall have to spend the night here?"

"Why not? Many devout pilgrims have done so. We have food, even shelter." She pointed out a roof of yellowed bracken covering the open pergola before the church. "Do not be vexed," she added, softly. "None will know of this—except my *si'ora*, who is devoted to my interests, despite the severity of her virtue. And—at least you will not go away quite tomorrow!"

He knew then for a certainty what he had at once suspected: She had deliberately arranged the boat so that it might drift away. He felt his spine stiffening. "Is there not some means of calling the priest to our aid?"

Her smile glinted mischievously. "Only by ringing the chapel bell—which would be to make the little contretemps a trifle conspicuous, no?"

A banal phrase kept recurring to his mind, about history repeating itself. He measured the distance to shore with his eye. "I might swim across to wherever the priest lives."

"Absurd!" She sobered with anxiety. "It is much farther than it looks; besides, in this darkness how could you find his house?"

It was true that the stars which made the Adriatic a sea of smooth-swelling mercury left the steep, wooded shore very black. Then he noted, halfway between, a

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small fixed light which was the lantern set out on their rocks nightly by the sisters of the small island convent for the guidance of belated fishermen. "That at least is nothing of a swim," he muttered in relief. "I can make it in no time, and borrow one of their boats."

The woman was looking at him oddly. "How resourceful! And how truly chivalrous," she murmured, "to sacrifice your beautiful white flannels in the interest of a lady's reputation!"

"I might leave them here in your care till I return."

"*Mon Dieu*, consider the feelings of the poor sisterhood!"

"Which I must do my best to salve," he replied, borrowing a touch of her cynicism, "with sufficient coin of the realm. . . . Besides, there is a type of undergarment, known to my countrymen as the B.V.D., which lends itself quite modestly to athletic purposes."

The coolness of the sea about him quieted his overtaut nerves—he was a vigorous swimmer; and one of the old women, startled from her evening devotions by the sound of a voice out of the deep, was made to understand without too much difficulty the plight of the marooned pilgrims.

Clymene stood waiting at the little dock when he returned with his borrowed boat, all their paraphernalia gathered together, the rug and cushions and uneaten picnic. "So that no further time should be lost," she murmured, helpfully. "The moon rises late to-



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night; I think we shall not wait for it." She added that he need not trouble to row her all the long way to the mainland; she had decided to ask hospitality of the sisterhood. "No doubt, to practice for once the ascetic renunciations will be beneficial to the character," she explained.

She chatted along amiably and charmingly, as always; but the conversation on Rodney's part was somewhat constrained. Once, Mr. Brandreth's name having been mentioned for some reason, he yielded to an impulse to repeat to her that gentleman's confession of devotion, of his ardent wish to marry her.

"Ah?" her voice came to him ironically through the darkness. "The good Dmitri! Always so loyal; and so very dull. But I am glad you have told me this. You Anglo-Saxons," she added, "have a certain—how shall I say?—a certain to-be-expectedness, a tenacity of type, which deserves admiration."

They parted at the convent dock very cordially. He did not know that she waited there a long time for a last glimpse of his lithe young mounting figure against the skyline opposite, watching the moon rise and set over the Isle of Death, alone. He thought of her often afterwards with a certain embarrassment; preferably as the wife of the Anglo-Greek gentleman, Mr. Demetrios Brandreth.

It was his wife Jane, to whom he had duly reported the episode, who sometimes waked in the night, cold

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with perspiration, remembering a thing which Rodney himself had by that time almost forgotten—the sapphire with its carven Medusa head, and its little compartment at the back where Clymene Dessylas kept her antidote for ennui.



## DALMATIAN EXPRESSIONS

Baba—old woman	Kuma—godchild or godparent
Barun—baron	Lepa—beautiful
Devishto—virtue	Lindzo—a Dalmatian dance
Dobra dan—good-day	Magstori—the working-class
Dollina—depression in hill country where rich soil accumulates	Maika—mother
Domachi—house spirits	Masha—native woman
Domachia—dwelling	Neva—bride-to-be (nevačica, dim.)
Gospa—lady	Opanzi—braided sandals
Gospari—gentry (sing., gospod)	Pesmé—national ballads
Goslé—a kind of guitar	Pilo—a wall well
Gouslar—a musician	Podravljén Amerikančì—welcome to the Americans
Gumno—threshing-floor	Provodadjia—marriage-maker
Heidoucs—freebooters	Rakija—prune brandy
Ispit—betrothal feast	Slava—feast day
Izba—main room of a peasant house	Srbska—Serbian
Knez—count	Sveta—saint
Kokiča—chicken	Tarača—terrace
Kokiče—popcorn	U kućicu maiko—come into the hive, mother
Kolatch—a sort of sweet bread	Vila—wood-witch
Kolo—national dance	Zamak—mansion
Kriza—crisis	Zito—a special pudding
Krst—porous rock	

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### *DALMATIAN-ITALIAN*

Che bella—how beautiful	Ma, che brutta cosa—what a
Che meraviglia—how marvelous	hard thing
Chi lo sa?—who knows?	Padrone—patron
Dio Bonnino—good little God	Signor baronino mio—my little
Donna di servizio—serving-	baron
woman	Testa dura—hard-headed
E vero—it is true	

### *CORFIOT and ALBANIAN WORDS*

Besa—oath	Paques—Easter
Foro—open square	Pelturina—veil worn around
Ghegs—mountain men	head and throat
Gogoli—bewitched	Si'ora—an old woman servant
Kyria—lady or madam	Spiti—house
Malia—twist of hair worn	Toshks—plainsmen
around head	Zouschka—an Albanian matron
Ora—a wood-voice	













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